

## PSALM 150

INTRODUCTION.—Ps. 150 is the final of the Hallelujah psalms. It is the great closing Hallelujah, or Doxology, of the Psalter. Thus the book of Psalms concludes with a call for everything that has breath to join in the great anthem of praise.

On the authorship of Ps. 150, see FE 371.

**1. Firmament of his power.** As in Ps. 148, the summons to praise extends to the dwellers of both heaven and earth.

**3. Trumpet.** Heb. *shophar*, horn (see p. 39).

**Psaltery.** Heb. *nebel*, harp (see p. 33).

**Harp.** Heb. *kinnor*, lyre (see p. 34).

**4. Timbrel.** Heb. *toph*, a small type of hand drum (see p. 30).

**Stringed instruments.** Heb. *minnim* (see p. 41; see on Ps. 45:8).

**Organs.** Heb. *ôugab*, flute (see p. 38; see on Gen. 4:20).

**5. Cymbals.** Heb. *s\ils\elim* (see p. 30).

**High sounding.** Heb. *teruôah*, “piercing.”

**6. Praise ye the Lord.** With one final grand “hallelujah” (see on Ps. 146:1) the greatest book of songs ever composed, closes. In the great audience chamber of the psalms, where our hearts have thrilled with many soul-stirring choruses, we rise and stand in reverence as the great symphony reaches its climax. We would fain join our voices in the last great “hallelujah” to the Lamb.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

6 5T 315

## The PROVERBS

### INTRODUCTION

**1. Title.** The title, Proverbs, is taken from the first words of the book. The Hebrew word translated “proverbs” comes from the root *mashal*, meaning “to be like,” “to compare.” The noun has acquired several meanings: (1) a parable (see Eze. 17:2; 20:49; 24:3–5)—the parables by which the Saviour taught the people are properly *meshalim* in this sense; (2) a proverbial saying, a brief, terse folk saying (1 Sam. 10:12; 24:13; Eze. 12:22, 23; Eze. 18:2, 3); (3) a byword (Deut. 28:37; 1 Kings 9:7; Ps. 44:14); (4) a prophetic figurative discourse (Num. 23:7, 18; 24:3, 15); (5) a poem of various types: (a) an ode (Num. 21:27–30); (b) a didactic poem (Ps. 49:3, 4; Ps. 78:2); (c) a poem consisting of short sentences of ethical wisdom, for example, many of the proverbs of Solomon. The idea of comparison, resident in the verb root *mashal*, runs through many of these definitions.

**2. Authorship.** That Solomon was the author of the book seems evident from chs. 1:1; 10:1; 25:1. See, however, on chs. 30:1; 31:1. It is also known that Solomon “spake three thousand proverbs” (1 Kings 4:32). Until recently the authorship or divine authority was scarcely disputed in either the Jewish or Christian church. Modern scholarship tends to assign a postexilic date to

the book and denies the Solomonic authorship of the book.

Solomon wrote the Proverbs in the early years of his reign, when he was still obedient to the Spirit of God within his heart. “It was the wide dissemination of these principles, and the recognition of God as the one to whom all praise and honor belong, that made Solomon’s early reign a time of moral uplift as well as of material prosperity” (PK 34).

**3. Historical Setting.** Solomon was the third king of Israel. The people had rejected the rulership of God when they turned from Samuel, a wise and God-fearing judge, and requested a king (1 Sam. 8:4–7). The reason for this decision was the desire of the people to have a visible king to lead them to battle against the growing power of the nations around them, and the Sea Peoples who had established themselves in Palestine (1 Sam. 8:20; see on Gen. 10:14; 21:32; see also Vol. II, p. 27).

Early in his reign Saul successfully subdued the enemies of Israel. His prosperity might have continued had not the same spirit of self-aggrandizement that had led the people to call for a king, rendered him intolerant of the rebukes of God (see 1 Sam. 15:22, 23).

David began his reign with good prospects of success. Later the childlike trust in God that had marked his early career was marred by compromises. The king copied some of the ways of other monarchs and fell into grievous sin. His early faith, his fall, and his sincere repentance all had their influence upon Solomon. In the last years of his life David sought to arm Solomon against the sins that had brought such tragic consequences upon himself and his people (see PP 753; 1 Kings 2:1–4). Solomon began his reign in a spirit of humility and consecration which enabled the Lord to bless him with unmatched prosperity (1 Kings 3:5–15). This era was, indeed, the golden age of the Hebrew monarchy. His fame had spread abroad throughout much of the world, and many sought his wisdom (1 Kings 4:31–34; 10:1–13). One of the great errors of his life was his multiplication of wives, many of whom were idolatrous (1 Kings 11:1–4). The influence of these women was to turn his heart from God. See pp. 1059, 1060.

**4. Theme.** The theme of the book of Proverbs is to exalt wisdom, which is described as “the fear of the Lord” (chs. 1:1–7; 9:10). Although wisdom has its basis in the maintenance of a right relationship with God, the book is not really a religious treatise. Much of the instruction is ethical and moral rather than spiritual. “Its principles of diligence, honesty, thrift, temperance, and purity are the secret of true success. These principles, as set forth in the book of Proverbs, constitute a treasury of practical wisdom” (Ed 135).

**5. Outline.** The brevity of the individual proverbs and the diversity of teachings prevent the book from having much unity and progression.

- I. Introduction, 1:1–7.
  - A. Title, 1:1.
  - B. The purpose, 1:2–6.
  - C. The basis of knowledge, 1:7.
- II. The Wisdom Section, 1:8 to 9:18.
  - A. Warning against the enticement of sinners, 1:8–19.
  - B. The call of wisdom, 1:20–33.
  - C. A series of admonitions, 2:1 to 7:27.
  - D. The call and work of wisdom, 8:1–36.
  - E. Wisdom and folly, 9:1–18.
- III. A Collection of Proverbs, 10:1 to 22:16.
- IV. A Series of Maxims, 22:17 to 24:34.
- V. Proverbs Collected for Hezekiah, 25:1 to 29:27.
- VI. The Words of Agur, 30:1–33.

VII. The Words of Lemuel, 31:1–31.

A. The instruction of a mother, 31:1–9.

B. Acrostic poem to the virtuous woman, 31:10–31.

## CHAPTER 1

1 *The use of the proverbs.* 7 *An exhortation to fear God, and believe his word.* 10 *To avoid the enticings of sinners.* 20 *Wisdom complaineth of her contempt.* 24 *She threateneth her contemnners.*

**1. The proverbs of Solomon.** On the meaning of the word “proverbs” see Introduction, p. 945. These proverbs, or aphorisms, are given in the measured parallelism characteristic of Hebrew poetry. Solomon was eminently qualified for the task of writing these sayings. He was endowed with a degree of wisdom that was the wonder of the whole world (1 Kings 3:12; 10:23–25); he was a diligent observer of the created works of God; and his dealings with men of all nations added to his store of knowledge and understanding (see 1 Kings 4:29–34; 1 Kings 10:1–3).

**2. Wisdom.** Heb. *chokmah*, a word occurring 141 times in the Bible, and almost without exception translated “wisdom.” *Chokmah* comprehends a number of ideas: (1) technical skill (Ex. 28:3; 35:26; 1 Kings 7:14); (2) cleverness, shrewdness (1 Kings 2:6; 3:28; Job 39:17; Isa. 10:13; 29:14); (3) practical, worldly wisdom (1 Kings 4:30; Isa. 47:10); (4) pious wisdom (Deut. 4:6; Ps. 37:30; 90:12; Prov. 10:31; Isa. 33:6; Jer. 8:9); (5) wisdom as an attribute of God (Ps. 104:24; Prov. 3:19; Jer. 10:12; 51:15); (6) personified divine wisdom (Prov. 8:1–36; 9:1–6); (7) ideal human wisdom (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:2; etc.).

“Wisdom” is distinguished from “knowledge” (Heb. *da'ath*, v. 7) in that “wisdom” has to do with character and conduct, whereas “knowledge” is primarily intellectual enlightenment. Knowledge may be merely an accumulation of unrelated and unorganized facts without the ability to apply these facts to practical life. Wisdom is the faculty of being able to make a practical use of facts. An intermediate step may be conceived of in the term “understanding” (Heb. *binah*, v. 2). Understanding implies the ability to evaluate and organize facts, an essential framework for wisdom.

The wisdom so highly exalted in the book of Proverbs is practical sagacity such as reveals itself in the ideal moral and religious character. The various aspects of wisdom describe the characteristics of one who has met the standards of God. The wisdom described by Solomon is comprehensive in that it enters into all phases of practical life. It does not separate piety from the common duties of life. In the experience of one who has true wisdom, every thought and act has reference to the requirements of God.

Instead of the ideal “wisdom,” the NT speaks of “righteousness” (Matt. 6:33), “holiness” (2 Cor. 7:1; Heb. 12:10), “charity” (1 Cor. 13, properly “love”), but comprehends by these a similar characteristic. The emphasis in all of these concepts is on character rather than on ritualism or even dogma insofar as it relates to theoretical Christianity.

Knowledge and understanding are the basis of wisdom. The exercise of wisdom is a function of the intelligent mind. True knowledge is not a guarantee of right action, but right action is accompanied by a knowledge of what is right and is dependent upon it. The relationship between the two concepts is forcefully set forth in the following statement: “The truths of the Word of God are the utterances of the Most High. He who makes these truths a part of his life becomes in every sense a new creature. He is not given new mental powers, but the darkness that through ignorance and sin has clouded the understanding, is removed. The words, ‘A new heart also will I give you,’ mean, ‘A new mind will I give you.’ A change of heart is always attended by a clear conviction of Christian duty, an understanding of truth. He who gives the Scriptures close,

prayerful attention will gain clear comprehension and sound judgment, as if in turning to God he had reached a higher plane of intelligence" (EGW RH Dec. 18, 1913).

**Instruction.** Heb. *musar*, from the root *yasar*, "to admonish," "to discipline," "to correct," or sometimes "to chastise". *Musar* may also mean the result of instruction and hence be almost equivalent to wisdom.

Growth in wisdom comes as the result of instruction, but only such instruction as has its source in divine revelation. The Bible is the true basis for such teaching.

**3. Wisdom.** Heb. *sēkel*, a word that is different from the one translated "wisdom" in v. 2. *Sēkel* means "prudence," "insight," "good sense." The word, however, is synonymous with wisdom. Hebrew poetry characteristically multiplies synonyms. These are to be understood as parallel expressions rather than ideas distinct from one another. The effect of such multiplication of expressions is to emphasize the comprehensiveness of the subject under consideration and to give the subject full coverage in all its aspects.

**4. To give.** Verses 4–6 state for whom the book is intended: the simple, the young, and the wise.

**Subtily.** Heb. *ōrmah*, "craftiness," "prudence." The word may either be used in a bad sense, as in Ex. 21:14 (translated "guile"), or in a good sense, as here and in Prov. 8:5, 12.

**5. A wise man.** We might expect the wise man to avoid this book as unnecessary for him, but such a one well knows that he has but touched the fringe of the rich treasures of the universe and will gladly avail himself of help such as God alone can give.

**6. Interpretation.** Heb. *melisāh*, "a satire," or "mocking poem" (Hab. 2:6). Here probably a "figure," or "enigma."

**Dark sayings.** Or, "riddles," enigmatical allusions that require explanation.

**7. Fear of the Lord.** That is, reverence for the Lord. The fear of the Lord is that reverent attitude compounded of love, awe, and gratitude that distinguishes men who have realized their own unworthiness and have found salvation in God's gracious plan. There is no form of mental training that can compare with the earnest study of the Scriptures.

**Beginning.** Heb. *reōshith*. This word can also mean "principal part." The fear of the Lord not only is the first step in the acquirement of all true knowledge but is also the central emphasis of knowledge. If knowledge does not lead to a surrender of life to Jesus Christ, it has missed its aim. "Call no man brilliant who has not the wisdom to choose the Lord Jesus Christ—the light and life of the world. The excellence of a man is determined by his possession of the virtues of Christ" (EGW letter 106, July 15, 1902).

**Fools despise.** In the OT two different words are commonly used for fool, (1) *ōewil* and (2) *kesil*. Both designate stupid persons. Both occur frequently in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and seldom in any other book of the OT. Because the fool is contrasted with the wise man who has the fear of God, he stands portrayed as an impenitent sinner. Solomon presents the contrast between those who are continually learning more and more of God and His ways, and those who turn from righteousness and tread the path to everlasting death. The fools—those who do not fear the Lord, whether through a careless love of pleasure or willful defiance—reject all genuine wisdom. However much knowledge they may accumulate, the lack of the true center leaves them unbalanced, slaves to vain philosophies.

**8. My son.** A common form of address from a teacher to his pupils, and may be so used here; but the mention of mother suggests a more personal relation, as if Solomon were passing on to his son the fruits of his own experience. Accompanying the fear of the Lord is respectful obedience to parents. "Instruction" includes the thought of discipline, suggesting that the father

should be the ultimate authority in the home. Nevertheless the mother usually has most to do with the training of the children, and it is often the memory of mother's gentle guidance that holds a youth to the path of right or brings him back when he has strayed.

**9. Ornament of grace.** How few children wear the graceful ornament of willing obedience! Not chains of restraint, but chains of honor, await those who heed their parents as did Joseph and Daniel (Gen. 41:42; Dan. 5:29).

**10. Consent thou not.** A reminder that the will is sovereign. Neither man nor devil can make us sin except by persuading us to will to do it (see Rom. 6:13). The soul must purpose the sinful act before passion can dominate over reason (see 5T 177). Sometimes men who have long resisted, submit to iniquity, feeling that they have done all that can be expected of them. But temptation, no matter how strong, is never an excuse for sin. Even though the pressure mounts with continued resistance, the will can and must learn to say No—to the very end.

**11. Lay wait for blood.** This bald appeal to cruelty and greed may seem to have few parallels in these civilized times. But the passions of unregenerate man have not changed. Cold-blooded murders, carried out for such trifling reasons as a desire for publicity or the satisfaction of curiosity, mark our age. Callous robberies, bringing great suffering to the innocent and needy, are a daily occurrence. These verses are a much-needed warning to young men today.

**13. Fill our houses.** Here is portrayed the motivating factor of the thief. Flattered by the offer of becoming one of a notorious group and of sharing in the profit from evil achievements, the greedy and the indolent are easily persuaded to join. The next section (vs. 15–19) shows how vain is the hope of permanent and satisfying gain from despoiling others.

**15. Walk not thou.** The author sets forth the reasons why a life of crime—or even an attempt to make excessive profits within the law—does not pay. There is danger in even a casual acquaintance with evildoers, for they seem to be impelled to their evil deeds by a power beyond themselves, and association with them will so warp a man's views of right and wrong that he may find himself joining in their way of life.

**16. Their feet run to evil.** The rapidity of the degeneration of one who has cast in his lot with evil men is frightening. Before long the conscience is so hardened that the thought of murder becomes tenable even to a youth who has been brought up in the fear of the Lord.

**17. The net is spread.** The unsatisfying results of a life of crime are so commonly and obviously displayed that one who has but the intelligence of a bird should be wise enough to avoid the snare set for him.

**18. For their own blood.** Criminal activities inevitably lead to the ruin of those who practice them. Few make permanent financial profit, and even these have lost the quiet happiness that honesty alone can ensure. Forced by fear of betrayal to remain on good terms with unpleasant associates, they cannot break out of the net into which they boastfully entered. Repentance, which involves a willingness to pay the penalty for former misdeeds, is the only way out.

**19. Taketh away the life.** The covetous man is heedless of the sufferings of the poor whom he oppresses and whose lives he may shorten by deprivation, whether by violence or by recognized commercial practices. The solemn warnings here enumerated indicate that such sin will bring its own evil consequences in this life as well as in the day of judgment (see Rom. 6:23; James 1:14, 15).

**20. Wisdom crieth without.** Throughout the early part of the book, wisdom is personified as a pure and noble woman. The Hebrew uses a plural noun, *chokmoth*, for wisdom (here and in chs. 9:1; 24:7) with a singular verb. *Chokmoth* is probably the plural of intensity, standing for all

kinds of wisdom. Some hold that *chokmoth* should be *chokmuth*, an abstract singular form.

**22. How long?** Verses 22–33 give the words that wisdom is pictured as speaking. Notice the progression in degrees of culpability: the simple who do not realize the need for instruction in righteousness, those who openly mock at good, and the confirmed transgressors who are called fools. The simple and the scorners are too occupied with trivialities and self-pride to heed the warnings, and the fools actively hate and oppose righteousness.

**23. Pour out my spirit.** If the simple, the scorners, or even fools will turn and listen, wisdom will instruct them and imbue them with the spirit of essential knowledge. At the same time the Spirit of God will make clear to them the words of conviction and will bring them to repentance. The measure of the Spirit is determined by the capacity of the one who accepts, not by the God who gives (see GC 477).

**24. Ye refused.** Still speaking, both to the indifferent and to the active opposers, wisdom describes the fearful and inevitable results of a neglect to heed the call to gain a knowledge of God. These foolish ones go their own way, deaf to the warning words and blind to the beckoning arms.

**25. Set at nought.** Heb. *paraÔ*, “to let alone,” “to neglect.” The rejectors of God’s mercy are not pictured as ignorant of good or as claiming that salvation is worthless; they are shown as simply too busy with lesser things or too hardened in sin to heed the call (Luke 14:18; Acts 24:25). They are not the heathen, but the careless or backslidden believers. It is dangerous to put off the day of responding to the pleadings of wisdom.

**26. I also will laugh.** As the simple ones laughingly passed by the offer of salvation, so wisdom ignores their plight, and as the fools and scorners mocked at the way of life, so will their cries for mercy be met with the solemn execution of judgment.

**27. Distress.** “Distress” and “anguish” are synonyms, signifying literally “squeezing and narrowness,” in contrast with the freedom of a large sphere. Wisdom is not represented as bringing the disasters. These come as a result of neglecting the instruction of wisdom and refusing the divine protection that wisdom offers.

**28. Shall they call.** When God, through wisdom, called and beckoned, they would not heed. Now they call in vain for a saving knowledge of the Lord (see Amos 8:11, 12).

In storm and earthquake, in war and want, careless, sinful men frequently call upon God for salvation and promise reformation of life if He will save them from peril. Too often, however, when peace and quiet return, they laugh off the promises made during their fears. While it is true that imminence of death at times brings genuine conversions, a last-minute salvation is seldom secured by those who have long turned a deaf ear to the call of the Spirit.

The fullest and most terrible fulfillment of this prophecy will occur at the close of the world’s history. When the Spirit of God has been finally rejected and the protection of grace removed, the impenitent will find themselves at the mercy of a cruel master whom they have chosen to serve in place of God (see GC 614).

Why is there no answer? Why does God mock at these poor souls for whom He gave His Son? To say that God mocks is, of course, using figurative language. Actually God is deeply grieved when men turn against Him (see Eze. 33:11; Hosea 11:8). However, men are free moral agents, and God does not prevent the results of a course of their own choosing. At the same time He does all He can to prevent men from making a contrary choice. He appeals to all to come to Him even though they have been long-time enemies of good (Eze. 18:21; Matt. 11:28; Rom. 5:8; Rev. 22:17).

**29. Hated knowledge.** When they had hearts soft enough to be impressionable, they

refused to permit the Spirit of God to work upon them. Now their hearts have become hardened and their characters fixed. Now it is too late. Any simulated repentance is only a desire to escape the dreadful results of their sins. Even if these men were granted another opportunity, it would produce no change.

Real forgiveness is not a mere excusing of sin, but a cleansing of the sinner (1 John 1:9). Without a genuine surrender to the instruction and control of the Holy Spirit and an earnest desire to be changed, no sinner can be saved.

**Did not choose.** The fear of the Lord would have been to them the beginning of saving knowledge (v. 7). These people did not want such knowledge, because it would have interfered with their enjoyment of wickedness. Now they would like to evade the inevitable consequences.

**31. Of their own way.** It is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God that removes the wicked from His presence (Hosea 13:9; 14:1). It is the impenitent themselves who have placed their wills at cross-purposes with the Source of life, so that His loving presence will be to them a consuming fire (see DA 764, 107; GC 36). The careless and the obdurate suffer a similar fate, for neither is fit to live in a perfect world. To them, eternal life in sinless surroundings would be eternal torment; death is a merciful release from the pangs of vain regret (see SC 20).

**32. The turning away.** It is backsliding into a rejection of God because of pre-occupation with the riches of this world that will bring destruction to many who confidently count on eternal life (see Jer. 8:5).

**33. Whoso hearkeneth.** Those who give heed to the wise counsel of God and obey the precepts of wisdom remain peaceful in a world of woe. While their hearts are touched with pity for those who suffer, they have no fear for themselves. They look forward with confidence to the salvation that has been promised (see Ps. 16:9).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

5 4T 361

7 7T 71

8–104T 208

10 AH 459, 466; CG 218; ML 215; MYP 334; 3T 47

15 ML 215

20–334T 208

23 MYP 334

24, 25 GC 642

24–262T 41

24–31PP 558; 5T 72

24–331T 263

25, 26 1T 81

26 1T 269

27 GC 644

27, 28 1T 82

28 MYP 334

29 GC 286

30–32PP 739

31 GC 286

33 GC 285; MYP 334; PP 558

## CHAPTER 2

1 *Wisdom promiseth godliness to her children, 10 and safety from evil company, 20 and direction in good ways.*

**1. My son.** The return to the address, “my son,” indicates that Solomon is no longer speaking in the name of wisdom. The series of conditional clauses that begins here leads up to the conclusions in vs. 5 and 9. The appeal to hide the commandments refers to the storing away of words for guidance in future difficulties.

**2. Incline thine ear.** Diligence is here combined with love of learning. To do right, one must not only desire to be good but must also be willing to exert the necessary effort.

**3. If thou criest.** A change of metaphor and a change of emphasis. The picture of wisdom crying out to the simple gives place to the young man crying out after the power of discrimination (see ch. 1:20).

**4. Seekest her.** The necessity for an active endeavor to gain wisdom is further emphasized. Men must dig deep in search of a saving knowledge of the grace of God with the perseverance of a prospector seeking for precious metals. Desire for earthly treasure compels men to expend much time, money, and effort in what often proves to be a fruitless search. The same intense devotion should mark the searcher for divine wisdom. No disappointment or difficulty should be permitted to quench the ardor of the search. The revelation of God in His Word is the mine in which every believer must individually dig for truth (see GC 598).

**5. Find the knowledge.** Treasure hunts may fail, but one who truly seeks will never fail to reach an understanding of the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. Although an exhaustive knowledge of God can never be obtained, even though a happy eternity is spent in learning ever more of His loving nature, knowledge sufficient for salvation is promised to every searcher for truth (Matt. 7:7, 8).

**God.** Heb. *ŌElohim*, occurring only five times in the book of Proverbs, here and in chs. 2:17; 3:4; 25:2; 30:9. *Yahweh*, translated “LORD,” is the commonly used term for Deity in this book.

**6. The Lord giveth.** Here follow reasons why the earnest searcher for truth will never fail to find wisdom. The Lord is the source, and He is impelled by His great love to reward all who turn to Him.

**8. Preserveth the way.** Those who walk in the broad path of sin have rejected the protection of God, but those in the narrow way of righteousness are His special care. All the forces of heaven are instantly available to guide, strengthen, and protect them (Heb. 1:13, 14).

**9. Understand righteousness.** The purpose of the book as stated in ch. 1:3 will be fulfilled as a further consequence of the sincere search for knowledge. A true understanding of the good way of life is pre-requisite to walking in that way.

**10. When.** Better, “for.” The Hebrew preposition *ki* may have either of these meanings.

**Heart.** Really, “mind.” To us the heart is figuratively the seat of emotions. To the Hebrews the bowels were the seat of emotions, and the heart the seat of the intellect.

**Knowledge is pleasant.** Many acquire learning upon the urging of parents or teachers, and gather a measure of wisdom, but there is a vast difference between such learning and that which is inspired by a love of wisdom. Especially is this the case when the wisdom to be learned is the way of eternal life. Salvation from sin demands an active love for truth and a delight in right knowledge.

**11. Discretion shall preserve thee.** Love for truth leads to a consideration of right and wrong and a purposing in the heart to avoid that which is evil. Daniel had thus counted the cost and determined not to partake of meats offered to idols (see PK 481), whatever might be the



outcome. Such preconsideration arms against temptation and protects from failure under sudden pressure (Dan. 1:8).

**12. Evil man.** “Man” is a supplied word and not necessarily needed. It is sufficient to say “way of evil.” From such, understanding will preserve us.

**Froward things.** Heb. *tahpukoth*, “perversities,” from the root *haphak*, “to turn,” or, “to overturn.” The perverseness with which false teachers twist the plain words of Scripture makes even some established believers begin to wonder as to what is truth. We must seek to avoid contact with those who do not wish to learn, but only to impart error. A deep love and knowledge of the truth is the only sure shield against the deceptions of the last days (see Matt. 24:24; GC 593, 594).

**13. The ways of darkness.** When men deliberately turn from light into the paths of darkness, they are deceived by a “strong delusion” (2 Thess. 2:10, 11; cf. John 8:12; 12:35; 1 John 2:11).

**14. Rejoice to do evil.** They hate the light because they love the wrong. When good men make mistakes, they sorrow for them afterward. But wicked men remember their evil deeds with pleasure. Not only do they enjoy their own misdeeds; they take pleasure in the perverseness of evil itself. That this applies to conditions existing today is shown by the failure of public opinion to react more vigorously against organized and premeditated crime.

**16. Strange woman.** Heb. *Ōishshah zarah*. Either “strange” woman in the sense of belonging to another nation or in the sense of not being a legitimate wife. The next verse supports the latter interpretation. That immorality was a serious problem in the days of Solomon as well as in modern times is indicated by the fourfold repetition of this theme (see chs. 5:3; 6:24; 7:5). Discretion and understanding (v. 11) will so guide a young man that they will deliver him from “strange women.” According to Paul a godly man will keep himself at a distance from temptation of this kind (1 Cor. 6:18). He will flee as did Joseph (Gen. 39:12), if such should be necessary. To stay and argue with a temptation that is reinforced by the inherited weaknesses of the human race is to lack true wisdom.

**17. Guide.** Heb. *Ōalluph*, “familiar one,” “confidant.” For other occurrences of *Ōalluph* see Prov. 16:28; 17:9; Jer. 3:4; Micah 7:5. Some have thought that the reference might be to the parents of the woman, but *Ōalluph* more likely means the husband, together with whom, in the early days of their marriage, the wife learned some of the most important lessons of life.

**The covenant of her God.** Evidently the marriage vows, though there is no specific reference in the OT to a religious marriage ceremony such as the Christian church has developed. There is, however, a suggestion in Mal. 2:14 that solemn vows were exchanged. This strange woman had not only gone against the customs of her people but had broken the binding promises she had made before the great God of Israel.

**18. Inclinet unto death.** Evil thoughts, the reading of impure books, gazing upon salacious plays and pictures, as well as the deeds to which they often lead, turn the feet to paths of death. Tens of thousands of Israelites died as a consequence of sins that began when they were persuaded to become mere onlookers at the Moabite festivities (Num. 25; PP 454–456). Though today retribution is not so swift, it is as sure as it was then.

**19. Return again.** This may refer to return from death, but it is also true that it is hard to restore to purity one who has turned aside to immorality. The will seems to be so weakened that the mind is often unable or unwilling to grasp the promised power of God to overcome sin. Some do find salvation, but many of those who turn into this way of death never return.

**20. Way of good men.** The wise man sums up the purpose of the counsel he has given.

The Israelites loved their Promised Land, yet their continual turning from right ways led to sudden death for many and sad exile for others.

**21. In the land.** Or, “in the earth.” The word translated “land” is also frequently translated “earth.” Not only will obedience to the voice of wisdom bring present good; it will also lead to eternal life in the beautiful new earth. Disregard of the Word of God brings trouble in this life and results in the plucking up from the earth of all who continue in sin. So complete will be this rooting out that no trace will be left (Obadiah 16; Mal. 4:1).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 Ed 185

2–11MH 456

3–5COL 114; ML 108; 3T 108

4 CH 39; CT 437, 460, 461; CW 34, 79; Ed 185, 189; FE 120, 169, 188, 307, 326; LS 355; MH 199; MM 124, 203; SL 37; 3T 447; 4T 499; 5T 266; 8T 157

4, 5 FE 390; 4T 414

6 Ed 14

8 PK 576

10, 11 6T 69

11 AH 55

13 GC 310; 3T 437; 5T 39

16 AH 59

18, 19 PP 461

20 AH 459; ML 214; Te 184

## CHAPTER 3

*1An exhortation to obedience, 5to faith, 7to mortification, 9to devotion, 11to patience. 13The happy gain of wisdom. 19The power, 21and the benefits of wisdom. 27An exhortation to charitableness, 30peaceableness, 31and contentedness. 33The cursed state of the wicked.*

**1. Law.** Heb. *torah*, most commonly rendered “law” in the OT. It comes from the root *yarah*, meaning “to throw,” “to shoot,” and in one form of the verb means “to teach,” “to instruct” (see Ex. 4:12; 24:12; Lev. 10:11; 1 Sam. 12:23). Hence *torah* means “teaching,” “instruction”; therefore the phrase is better rendered, “Forget not my instruction.” The LXX uses the word *nomos* here, meaning anything assigned, such as a custom, convention, or law. *Nomos* is the NT word for “law.” If the OT idea of instruction is applied to “law” throughout the Bible, it takes away from “law” the sense of blind compulsion and turns the commandments of God into guideposts on the road of life, warning against dangerous detours into paths of sin (see PK 179).

**2. Length of days.** Loving obedience to the teaching of God will result in an extension of the life span. Though this promise will be fulfilled for many in the attainment of a peaceful old age in this life, it will be true of all the righteous in the ever-rolling years of eternity.

**3. Mercy and truth.** Such traits are always pleasing to God and will win the favor of men. However friendly a man may be, he will fail to win friends if his promises cannot be relied upon.

**4. Good understanding.** That is, “good sense,” “prudence.”

**5. Trust in the Lord.** Entire trust in God is the only logical position for Christians to take. God has all knowledge and all power, and foresees and prepares against all the troubles that come upon man as sudden emergencies. For anyone to rely on his own understanding under such

circumstances is foolish indeed. It is also folly to alternate between trust in self and trust in God. To place little confidence in one's own understanding does not mean that a man must lay aside intelligence and give up the power of choice. Intelligence is needed to determine from the Word of God and from God's guiding providences what is the divine will. A will strengthened and cleansed by God is needed if one is to follow a true course through to the end.

**6. He shall direct.** Or, "it is He who will direct." The Hebrew emphasizes that God Himself will make straight and plain the path of His servant, when His servant acknowledges Him in every phase of life's many activities.

**7. In thine own eyes.** By pointing out the danger of self-trust, Solomon reinforces his previous counsel (v. 5). Many have started to walk the path of right with complete trust in the Saviour, but have later begun to take the credit to themselves for their achievements and have ended up in sinful rebellion against God. Such was the experience of Solomon himself, but he was fortunate to awake to his sad condition before it was too late (see 1 Kings 11:1–13; PK 75–86).

**8. Navel.** The LXX and the Syriac read "body." Mental and physical health are closely connected one with another (ch. 17:22), and there is no greater stabilizer for nerves fretted by the rush and worry of life than the knowledge that God is an active partner in all that we do, an influence ensuring present contentment and ultimate victory (see Phil. 4:11–13; MH 241).

**9. With thy substance.** Or "with thy wealth." Malachi cites as one reason why the giving of part of the riches gained leads to greater gain the fact that God will rebuke the devourer and make possible a greater increase (Mal. 3:8–12). A more important reason is that the cheerful giving of ever-increasing sums in tithe and offerings as wealth increases will prove a bulwark against the subtle temptations to selfishness and covetousness. God can entrust a man who is a faithful steward of His means with still more of the wealth of the world, for it will be rightly used (see 3T 544–551).

**11. Chastening.** Heb. *musar* (see on ch. 1:2). From the idea of prosperity, Solomon turns to that of adversity. Adversity is often used by God as a means of awakening a man to danger.

**Be weary.** Heb. *ma'as*, primarily "to reject," "to retract from," hence "to feel a loathing," "to feel an abhorrence," "to feel a sickening dread." Some people permit the troubles that come upon them to drive them farther away from God, because they think that He is cruel or indifferent. How far from the truth this is, the next verse shows.

**12. Whom the Lord loveth.** Paul points out in his enlargement upon this thought (Heb. 12:5–11) that we gave reverence to our earthly fathers when they disciplined us. Perhaps as children we dimly perceived that they were doing it because they loved us. The children of God should believe that all things are under the control of a heavenly Father who delights in them and who will work circumstances for their good if they submit cheerfully to the discipline and learn the lessons it was intended to teach.

**13. Happy is the man.** Having been chastened by the Father, the child has found the way of blessing and is now continuing to draw out understanding from the rich stores of heavenly knowledge. All blessings are available to the man who has begun with the fear of the Lord, has progressed to wisdom, and is now drinking from a spring of ever-flowing water of life (see John 4:14).

**14. Merchandise of silver.** Solomon compares the value of wisdom to that of other precious things. He draws some of his figures from his commerce in gold and in silver (see 1 Kings 10:21–23). He well knew the profits to be gained by trading in these precious metals. Nevertheless, he realized that the income from trading in wisdom was greater and more lasting.

When the love of money comes between a man and the increase of his holdings in true wisdom, his material riches have become a snare (see 1 Tim. 6:9, 10). If the choice must be made, it is better to trade in understanding and be poor in gold and silver than to reap a harvest of earthly riches and be poor in wisdom and other eternal treasures.

**15. Rubies.** The word here translated “rubies” is not used in the Bible in a context that makes its precise meaning clear. Some translate it “pearls”; others, “precious stones of all kinds”; still others, “coral,” because a similar Arabic word means “branching.” This much is clear from v. 14, that the word signifies something very precious, perhaps even more so than “fine gold,” for Solomon seems to be building up to a climax of value. Wisdom is so much to be desired that there is nothing a man may wish for that can surpass it in value. The LXX reads, “precious stones.”

**16. Length of days.** Wisdom never comes alone. When Solomon chose to ask the Lord for wisdom, he was promised long life, riches, and honor (1 Kings 3:5–14). He here pictures wisdom as bringing these other gifts in her hands. In the enumeration of gifts in the book of Kings, long life is last, and conditional upon obedience to God’s commands. In the Proverbs, Solomon puts it first and in the right hand—the place of great honor in the East (see Ps. 110:1)—and riches and honor in the left hand.

While this promise may be regarded as applying today largely to the eternal reward of the righteous, it is still true that prudence and sagacity will do much to ensure long life and prosperity in this world. Many are suffering the ill effects of eating and drinking things that are harmful and of carrying out other unhealthful practices. It is the part of wisdom to study the relationship between diet and health, and to endeavor to live in harmony with the plan of the Creator. While the wise man today may not always attain to great wealth, he will find that godliness with contentment is still great gain and that good men will always honor wisdom (1 Tim. 6:6).

**17. Ways of pleasantness.** Many feel that trifling amusements and unproductive activities are the ways of pleasure, but true joy and lasting satisfaction are found only in following wisdom. Solomon emphasizes the serenity and blessedness of walking in the unfrequented paths of wisdom instead of following the multitude in search of the fleeting and unrewarding pleasures of the senses.

**18. Tree of life.** Because our first parents rejected wisdom as a guide and followed Satan, none of us has been privileged to taste of the tree of life. Divine wisdom will lead us into a way of life that will have much the same result. It will give us a fuller and longer life in this world, and gain for us access to the tree of life itself in the world to come (Rev. 22:14).

**19. Founded the earth.** Solomon presents wisdom as the divine power of God, creating the heavens and protecting those who put their confidence in Him. Some have taken “wisdom” here to refer to the second person of the Godhead, by whom all things were created (Col. 1:16; John 1:1–3). Such an application may be made in parts of Prov. 8, but the use of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge in parallel couplets suggests that no such thought was in Solomon’s mind when he wrote this passage.

**20. Broken up.** Literally, “cleft,” or “divided.” Some have thought that this might refer to the separation of the waters under the heavens from the waters above the heavens (Gen. 1:6–8), so that the dew could distill from above. Others see in the words a reference to the bursting forth from the earth of the great rivers. Divine wisdom was required to devise and execute a system that watered the earth without rain and erosion and also served to equalize the temperature over the whole of the globe (see on Gen. 1:6).

This system was completely changed at the Flood, so that the rain replaced the heavy dew, the rivers became drains, and the equalizing influence of the water below the firmament and above

the firmament was lost. Yet the earth remained habitable over a large part of its area. These facts are a further demonstration of the wisdom and foreknowledge of the Creator.

**21. Let not them depart.** There is no clearly evident antecedent for “them.” Some have assumed that it refers to “wisdom” and “discretion” in the next clause. However, both of these words are feminine, whereas “them” is masculine. In spite of this difficulty the text becomes clear only as these are made the antecedent.

**22. Soul.** Heb. *nephesh*. It is thus translated more than 400 times in the OT. In the majority of these instances *nephesh* means no more than “self” and is a synonym for the personal pronoun or for a person. For example, “if a soul shall sin” (Lev. 4:2) is equivalent to saying “if someone sin”; “against that soul” (Lev. 17:10) simply means “against that person”; “all that thy soul desireth” is equivalent to “all that you desire.” In the verse under consideration “unto thy soul” simply means “unto thee.” The sentence would then read, “so shall they be life unto thee.” Jesus came to give His sheep more abundant life (John 10:10), and all who seek to serve God acceptably will receive fresh supplies of physical strength as well as mental and spiritual power (MH 159).

**23. Walk in thy way safely.** Those who thus serve God walk in confidence and security, because they are walking in the way of wisdom, in which there are no stumbling blocks to cause them to fall. Those who turn to the right hand or to the left in search of amusement or selfish gain find themselves stumbling over unexpected obstacles and falling into sin and sorrow.

**24. Thy sleep.** Sleep is a relinquishing of the vigilance of waking hours, leaving the sleeper at the mercy of his enemies and in an unconscious state resembling death. He who is obedient to the counsel of the Lord can lie down in full awareness of the possibilities of danger and death, yet drift off like a weary child into quiet and untroubled sleep.

**25. Sudden fear.** It is hard to remain fearless in the face of sudden and unexpected danger. Only those who have built up a firm and enduring faith in the working together of all things for good (Rom. 8:28) can meet such an emergency with steady pulse and calm demeanor. The people of God should not dwell upon the time of trouble before them, and thus have a time of trouble beforehand. They should rather meet each day’s problems in the strength of the Lord. They should expect the Lord to lead them into circumstances that will build up their faith so that they may be prepared to meet greater troubles ahead. If they will be among those translated, they must be prepared to stand without a mediator in a world that is racked by the strife of men and the mad raging of the unrestrained elements of nature themselves (see 4T 251; PK 513).

**26. Keep thy foot.** Compare Ps. 121:3.

**27. Withhold not good.** The wise man turns suddenly to practical matters and begins each of the next five verses with a statement of prohibition. There is a timeliness about deeds of kindness that multiplies their value. To withhold good that is within one’s power to perform is to rob God as well as man. The Son of man upon the throne of judgment regards those who neglect the least of His brethren as neglecting the Master Himself (Matt. 25:45).

If we delay the payment of a lawful debt when we are well able to settle the account, we are defrauding our creditor of the use of his own money, and we may seriously inconvenience him. In the same way the withholding of assistance from one in need aggravates unnecessarily his trouble. We may find, when eventually setting about to offer the help so much required, that it is too late. The evil may already have overtaken the unfortunate one, or some less dilatory benefactor may have gained the blessing we were too slow to secure.

**28. Go, and come again.** With many it is customary to put off the one who is seeking help. Whether it is the payment of a debt or the giving of a donation, some men seem to take

delight in forcing the recipient to return again and again before the sum is finally paid. The motive for the delay may be merely to make themselves appear important, or to demonstrate their power over others. Solomon points out that such conduct is unbecoming to a servant of God. It shows a lack of the unselfish love of God in the heart. Without such love, none can claim to be a true follower of Christ.

**29. Devise not evil.** A warning against insincerity or against deliberate deception in dealing with a trusting neighbor. If true wisdom brings the reward of eternal happiness amid the riches of the new earth, what foolishness it is to jeopardize that future by petty wrongs committed against an unsuspecting friend! So deceptive is the human heart that some who thus plunder their neighbors convince themselves that they do no wrong (see Jer. 17:9).

**30. Strive not.** The third of this series of “don’ts” refers to contention without cause. Today, as then, there are those who go to law about imagined wrongs. Unless a man has done us harm that is both real and reparable, we should not stir up trouble or take action against him. It may be thought that this advice permits litigation against those who have done us harm and thus contradicts the advice given by Paul (1 Cor. 6:1–7); but a comparison of the two passages shows complete harmony. Paul is speaking to the Corinthians about brother going to law with brother. It is better to suffer loss than to take a brother to court and so give publicity to the evil that a fellow believer has done us. God is well able to make up to us the loss. But the protection of the law is open to all who have been harmed by the actions of others, and the believer is free to seek protection against the malice of unbelievers (Rom. 13:3, 4).

**31. The oppressor.** Literally, “the man of violence”. The man who victimizes others may seem to prosper, and the honest man, who fails to reap as rich a harvest, may be tempted to feel a tinge of envy.

**32. The froward.** A self-willed person who turns from the way of righteousness. For his actions God can have nothing but abhorrence. If he continues in his perverse way, there is nothing for him but judgment and eventual destruction (ch. 14:12).

**Secret.** Heb. *sod*, “counsel,” “familiar converse,” “intimacy”. The counsel may be secret, as in Amos 3:7. God’s secret is the revelation of Himself in His Word, in nature, and in His providences. While the most prosperous unbeliever looks to a vague and uncertain future and trembles at the thought of death, the man who follows in the ways of God has an understanding of the workings of providence that enables him to face wealth or woe, life or death, with the same calm certainty.

**33. The curse of the Lord.** God’s curses are not like the curses of men. Men curse others because they hate or fear them and wish them harm. Balaam was called to curse Israel because Balak believed that Balaam could cause affliction to an innocent people by maledictions (Num. 22–24). God’s curses are not due to hate or to a sudden loss of temper. Some of the worst curses in the Bible are found in Deut. 28, and many of them are obviously pronouncements of the natural consequences of disobedience to God’s commands.

The coming of the Babylonians to capture Jerusalem was in part the result of Hezekiah’s failure to teach the visitors from that city of the true God, whose healing power brought restored health (Isa. 39), but the destruction of the city could still have been averted in Jeremiah’s day had the descendants of Hezekiah turned to the Lord and made it possible for God to intervene in their behalf (Jer. 17:19–27). The Babylonians never forgot the treasures they had seen, and were glad of the excuse to come and plunder Israel.

A study of all the curses in the Bible shows that many of them are prophecies of the natural and inevitable outcome of rebellion against God. “The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked” because the sinner’s self-willed course has prevented the God of love from bringing him

into harmony with the eternal laws of life and happiness.

That the blessing of God is upon the habitation of the righteous is equally true. The loving God enters into every heart and every home that is open to Him, and wherever He enters He brings peace and blessing (see Rev. 3:20).

**34. He giveth grace.** While the Lord pays back the scorers in their own coin by permitting them to reap the fruits of their own ways, He brings mercy and saving power to the humble. The statement in James 4:6 is a quotation from the LXX of this passage.

**35. Shall inherit glory.** The parallelism suggests that the lowly of v. 34 are the wise, and the scorers are the fools. This is in harmony with Solomon's whole argument concerning the value of true wisdom. The humble servant of God has been reborn into the family of heaven and inherits glory by the right of sonship. The appearance of exaltation that the proud, willful sinner sometimes gains is but a prelude to the shame that he will feel when the plan of salvation and the history of each sinner are opened before the assembled universe for inspection (Prov. 16:18; 2 Cor. 5:10; GC 666).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 2 Ed 197; MH 286

1-4CT 63, 127; DA 89

5 CSW 13; ML 185; MM 36; 4T 333, 335, 361, 538, 541; 5T 291, 427

5, 6 FE 110; GW 79; MH 417

6 CT 369; FE 414; MH 479; 2T 281; 4T 502

9 AH 389; CS 72, 81; 4T 474, 477; 5T 271, 481

9, 10 AA 345; CS 49, 65; Ed 140; 1T 325; 2T 331; 6T 307; 9T 253

13 GC 602; ML 159; 4T 414

13-154T 644; 5T 544

13-18PK 34; 6T 218

14 GC 312

14, 15 CT 50

17 AH 498; CH 222, 627; Ed 206; LS 293; MB 201; MYP 368; PP 600; Te 212; 1T 503; 4T 502, 626

18 MH 456

21 CH 295; 5T 146

21-23ML 109

23 3T 108

23-26MH 286

## CHAPTER 4

1 *Solomon, to persuade obedience, 3 sheweth what instruction he had of his parents, 5 to study wisdom, 14 and to shun the path of the wicked. 20 He exhorteth to faith, 23 and sanctification.*

**1. Instruction.** See on ch. 1:2.

**2. Good doctrine.** Solomon knows that the doctrine is good, for he received it from his father (v. 4). David had learned wisdom through long and often bitter experience.

**3. My father's son.** By this Solomon seems to imply more than the ordinary relationship. Solomon was the one who entered into his father's hopes and aspiration. It was he who was appointed of God to build the temple for which David had made such loving and careful preparation (2 Sam. 7:12-16; 12:24, 25; 1 Chron. 22:9). The intense affection of a God-fearing

and devoted parent could not but affect the life and character of Solomon.

**4. He taught me.** With this verse Solomon appears to quote the remembered words of David. We do not know where these words end and Solomon begins to speak again. Perhaps the clearest break is at the end of this chapter. The instruction is suited to a son of “tender” age (v. 3), whereas the next chapter takes up a subject that Solomon deals with many times—warnings against the strange woman.

**5. Get wisdom.** If this is typical of the counsel David gave to his favorite son, it is not surprising that Solomon requested wisdom when given an opportunity to ask for a special blessing (1 Kings 3:5–15). These verses contain an epitome of much of the instruction in the book of Proverbs.

**12. Not be straitened.** The narrow road is amply broad for one who would walk ever forward. Wisdom teaches men to walk the strait way (Matt. 7:14). If Solomon had always heeded this counsel, his feet would never have turned into paths where stumbling blocks brought him down to disgrace before God and man (1 Kings 11:1–13).

**14. Enter not.** Compare Ps. 1:1. To linger in the neighborhood of sin and sinners is to blunt the keen edge of conscience and make it easier to sit down with the scornful. Hence the sixfold warning to keep away (Prov. 4:15, 16).

**16. For they sleep not.** David’s own checkered career had brought him into contact with many sorts of evil men, and he was well aware of the sinister compulsion of sinners to induce someone else to join them in their favorite sin. If such men were asked whether they would advise others to do as they have done, they would, perhaps, answer No. Yet they continue to entangle others in the net that has snared their own feet, and do it as naturally as they eat and drink (see Job 15:16).

**18. Path of the just.** As the light steals almost imperceptibly across the sky at dawn and then grows brighter at an ever-increasing rate, until the full glory of the day is seen, so the light of truth shines upon the pathway of the righteous. The closer a man comes to his Lord, the more time and effort he gives to gaining a knowledge of God through prayerful Bible study, and the brighter shines the light.

It is not only the light shining upon the Christian that increases. The reflected light that shines out from the just man is also magnified in the same measure. The darkness of the last days will accentuate the growth of this radiance. Translation will bring the outward appearance into harmony with the inner brightness of the sinless saints (see GC 470, 476).

**19. Way of the wicked.** The darkness that blinds those who insist on following their own ways is so deceptive that such men think they are the ones who have the real light. They stumble and fall without knowing it. For them, the revelations of the judgment will come as a fearful surprise (see Matt. 25:44; GC 640, 654).

**22. Health.** The close relation between the mind and body seems here to be indicated. Wisdom and understanding bring healing to the body as well as to the soul. Folly, misunderstanding, anxiety, and guilt are common causes of physical and mental trouble (MH 241).

**23. Keep thy heart.** That is, “keep the mind” (see on ch. 2:10). Purity of mind is the first requisite for a sinless life. It is out of the abundance of the heart (mind) that good or evil comes into our lives (Luke 6:45). Sin is the indulging of the desires of the sinful, deceitful human heart (Jer. 17:9), hence the need for diligence in keeping the mind surrendered to God, who alone can keep it pure (see Eph. 4:17, 23).

**24. Perverse lips.** The tongue is the hardest member to control (James 3:1–12). Only purity of mind and a close watch upon the tongue will eventually subdue this wicked member. What the



tongue says is a good indication of the state of the mind. Gossip, especially about unsavory things, shows a mind still filled with earthy interests. Angry words show that pride and self-will still rule. Every slip of the tongue should send us to the Lord for cleansing of the mind (Ps. 101:5; Prov. 6:12; Matt. 12:34; Rom. 12:2).

**25. Look right on.** When the heart is set upon righteousness, the eyes will cease to rove. Modern city life besets the passer-by with a thousand temptations of every description, and there is no better protection than the straightforward walk, with the eyes fixed with singleness of purpose upon the goal. In the walk through life we must keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus if we are to attain salvation (Heb. 12:2).

**26. Ponder.** Heb. *palas*, “to weigh,” “to make level,” here perhaps to weigh mentally. Such a course would lead to the removing of every obstacle that might cause the foot to stumble. Purity of heart, truthfulness of speech, and singleness of purpose make possible the advancement of our ways in peace. These qualities bring their own reward, and to this God adds His own blessing.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

7 CT 50; Ed 225; PK 34

7, 8 MH 477

14 Ed 136; 5T 39

18 CE 37; CM 126; CT 230; CS 36, 138; CSW 34, 49; CW 35; Ev 297; FE 216; GC 476; GW 274; MB 202; MH 503; ML 6, 104, 113; MYP 32; SC 118; 2T 228; 3T 64, 542; 5T 14, 93, 413, 435, 486; 8T 247, 318

18, 19 3T 377

19 5T 74

22 AH 431; Ed 197; MH 114; ML 153; PP 600; 4T 552; 6T 225

23 CD 35; CH 341; MB 94; MH 349; ML 85; PP 460; 5T 536; 8T 101; WM 253

26 CT 535; FE 192, 193; ML 212; MYP 22; PK 348

## CHAPTER 5

1 *Solomon exhorteth to the study of wisdom.* 3 *He sheweth the mischief of whoredom and riot.* 15 *He exhorteth to contentedness, liberality, and chastity.* 22 *The wicked are overtaken with their own sins.*

**1. My son.** See on ch. 2:1.

**3. Strange woman.** See on ch. 2:16.

**As an honeycomb.** The words of temptation are smooth and sweet to the ears because they are carefully calculated to appeal to the inherited and cultivated weakness of mankind. An example of such words is given in ch. 7:14–20.

**4. Her end is bitter.** The bitterness of remorse is soon felt by the one who gives in to the temptation. If this alternation of pleasure and sorrow is persisted in, the pleasure fades and bitterness increases until the helpless slave of sin slips down into the place of the dead.

**Wormwood.** A plant of the genus *Artemisia*, with a very bitter taste (see Deut. 29:18; Jer. 9:15; 23:15).

**6. Lest thou shouldest.** It is difficult to translate the Hebrew of this verse. For “lest” the ancient versions read “not”. The negative makes the passage clearer. The verse may then be translated, “The path of life she does not make smooth, her ways vacillate, she knows it not”. Lost to the dictates of reason and conscience, the blind, headstrong sinner turns unsteadily from

one thing to another (ch. 7:12), but never enters the path of life in which alone can be found present happiness and future salvation.

**7. Hear me now.** Before painting the picture of the woe that will follow for those who fail to heed his warning, Solomon calls for special attention to his words.

**8. Come not nigh.** The need is stressed to keep oneself out of temptation rather than to trust in one's ability to resist those incitements to sin that have overcome so many men, great and small (Prov. 4:14; 7:24–27; 1 Cor. 6:18; 2 Tim. 2:22).

**9. Unto the cruel.** Some have thought that this refers to being sold into slavery by a wronged husband, but such was not the penalty for adultery (Deut. 22:22; John 8:5). To lose the prime of life to a coarsening and defiling enslavement of sin is a greater punishment than physical slavery could be.

**10. House of a stranger.** Property and money gone, a man in those days would seek employment as a domestic slave, all profit from his labor benefiting his master and not himself.

**11. And thou mourn.** The spiritual ruin that follows such a course is pictured in ch. 6. Here the emphasis is upon the total ruin of life. Life's high hopes and boundless possibilities are worn out in sullen servitude.

**12. I hated instruction.** Through the long years of remorse, the sinner bemoans his failure to heed the good instruction of his elders that could have spared him so much sorrow and ensured for him the true pleasure described in the verses following.

**14. Almost in all evil.** In the midst of the community of God's people this young man has permitted himself to sin against God and man. There is a peculiar hardening of the conscience in those who flaunt their sinfulness in the face of the church. Unlike youth brought up in Christless homes, these have sinned in the light of truth, and have deliberately turned from the outstretched hands of the Saviour and the appeal of the Spirit. God has no other means to reach them. They have cut themselves off from salvation (Heb. 10:26; PP 405). These considerations should move parents and teachers, as well as youth, to sober thinking and diligent effort.

**15. Thine own cistern.** A commendation of the happiness of married life. As a thirsty man is refreshed by the waters of a cistern, so a man is to find enjoyment in fellowship with his own wife (see 1 Cor. 7:1–5; 1 Tim. 5:14; cf. Ps. 127:4, 5).

**16. Let thy fountains.** This verse should probably be rendered as a question “should thy fountains, etc.?” The well and the cistern (v. 15) are connected with a house. Streams and fountains are generally found away from home. All these water supplies represent sources of enjoyment.

**18. Rejoice.** If marriage remains a sharing, if there is always a mutual desire to please, the passing years will but deepen and strengthen the joys of companionship. It is only when the attentions of courting days are lost in the humdrum toil of daily life and the partner is taken for granted, that either is likely to turn and seek unlawful satisfactions (see MH 360–362). Especially should a husband remember to express his pride in his wife and his enduring love for her in the years when age is taking its toll. Such expression will deepen his own affection and will support his companion during the period when it is necessary to make adjustments to advancing years (see Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:15, 16).

**19. With her love.** A man's love for his wife should be a strong affection that enters into every facet of life. It should be—in a good sense—an obsession, so that nothing is thought or done without being affected by the thought of the one who shares the life. In this sense love is an inebriation. The word for “ravished” may literally mean “intoxicated”.

**20. Strange woman.** How different is this infatuation from true love. Love deepens and becomes richer with the years, but a sinful attachment quickly becomes an unwanted

entanglement that brings the sorrows described in earlier verses. Why should a man let himself be drawn into such a snare?

**21. Eyes of the Lord.** Fidelity to the marriage vow is good sense and infidelity is folly, even if there were no judgment and no afterlife. But there is an afterlife, and entrance to it is dependent upon a willingness to be cleansed from all defilement. The adulterer meets a double condemnation. He loses the true joys of this life and is barred from the greater and more enduring joys of the life to come (Prov. 15:3; Mal. 3:5; Heb. 13:4).

**22. The cords.** Because he refuses instruction, the sinner is of necessity left to entangle himself more and more in the snares of sin. There is power to break the strongest bands (MH 175, 176), but the long indulgence of sinful propensities often leaves the sinner with no desire for salvation and no inclination to place his will on the side of the Saviour. The case is hopeless as long as the man will not seek the help of Him who can save to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3, 4 PP 461

3–5AH 59; 5T 398

8–11PP 461

21 MH 433; PP 217

22 COL 200; Ed 291; MH 429; SC 39

## CHAPTER 6

1 *Against suretiship*, 6 *idleness*, 12 *and mischievousness*. 16 *Seven things hateful to God*. 20 *The blessings of obedience*. 25 *The mischiefs of whoredom*.

**1. If thou be surety.** The custom of suretyship seems to have prevailed from early times. Job speaks of one striking hands to be surety for him (Job 17:3). Judah twice offered to be surety for Benjamin (Gen. 43:9; 44:33).

**2. Thou art snared.** The one who goes surety for a friend may be snared (1) by promising to be responsible for the payment of a sum larger than he can raise, at least without great distress, and (2) by putting too high a trust in the honesty, ability, and good fortune of his friend. Though Solomon warns against becoming surety (see chs. 11:15; 17:18), he is equally insistent that a man must help his friend and neighbor in time of need (chs. 14:21; 17:17; 18:24; 27:10). A combining of these ideas suggests the following advice: Pledge to a friend in need no more than you can afford *at that time*, and set the money aside for the duration of the pledge, so that you cannot be faced with a sudden demand for the payment of a sum that is beyond your ability to meet. Friends frequently fail sometimes through carelessness, because they know the burden will fall upon another, sometimes through sickness or poor business ability. Their failure is visited upon the unfortunate surety with all the severity of the law. His house and land, his furniture and clothes, his business and his stock, may all be at the mercy of the creditor. In Solomon's day, even the surety's person was not spared. He, his wife, and children, all could be sold into slavery.

**3. Deliver thyself.** What wonder, then, in view of the dire consequences that might ensue, that the wise man counsels his son to spare no effort to extricate himself from the snare into which his affection for his friend and his youthful inexperience have led him. Although slavery is no longer the penalty for unwise kindliness in standing guarantor for a friend, Solomon's words are still important counsel, and should be taught to every young man before he ventures into business life.

**6. Go to the ant.** Sloth is a surer cause of poverty and woe than being surety for another. The trusted friend may prosper and the pledge never be demanded, but the sluggard is certain of trouble.

**7. Having no guide.** Solomon was a diligent student of nature (1 Kings 4:33). He was intrigued by the way the ants carried on communal life in perfect order and cooperation, without anyone to oversee the process and dictate the work each member should do. God provides for the needs of the ant as He does for the needs of every living creature (Ps. 145:15, 16), but the ant builds her storehouses and gathers in the bounty by her own diligent labor. The strength, the skill, and the instinctive perseverance of the ant come also from God, the Creator and Upholder of all things.

**8. Gathereth her food.** There has been much discussion among naturalists and commentators as to whether the ant actually has habits such as here described. It is now established, however, that certain species of ants do store up food.

The LXX has the following interesting addition to v. 8: “Or go to the bee, and learn how diligent she is, and how earnestly she is engaged in her work; whose labours kings and private men use for health, and she is desired and respected by all: though weak in body, she is advanced by honouring wisdom.”

**9. How long?** The purpose in directing the sluggard to the ant is, of course, to shame him into activity. Man has been endowed with a large measure of free will. Instead of being driven by an implanted and imperative instinct, he is expected to use his intelligence and will power to drive him to provide for his needs. Many a sluggard has been shamed into activity by these and similar words, and has found, to his surprise, that work is enjoyable as well as rewarding. Others have continued in sloth and want until their miserable lives came to a dishonorable end.

**10. A little slumber.** A picture of the lazy man turning over in his bed and saying, “In a little while I will get up and tend to work.” Notice the repetition of this verse in ch. 24:33.

**11. One that travelleth.** As a traveler sets out upon his journey and perseveres until he reaches his goal, so surely will poverty and want come upon the sluggard. Fortunate circumstances, the help of friends and relatives, may postpone the day of reckoning, but it will surely arrive and come with the irresistible force of a skillful warrior in heavy armor.

**12. Naughty.** Heb. *beliyyaôal*, frequently translated “Belial” (Judges 19:22; 20:13; 1 Sam. 1:16; etc.). It denotes “worthlessness.” When connected with “person [Heb. *ôadam*],” as here, it describes a worthless, good-for-nothing, base man.

**Froward mouth.** Literally, “crookedness of mouth.” Idleness and sloth often lead to treachery and deceit. The course of the wicked man is marked by perversity of mouth. Not only does such a man lie; he advocates evil and puts a false interpretation upon good. The psalmist describes a similar “crookedness of mouth”: “His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity” (Ps. 10:7).

**13. With his eyes.** The sly wink of the evildoer seems to reveal depths of infamy. Wicked men have a secret language of their own, and use hands and feet as well as lips and eyes to express themselves to their companions when in the presence of honest men. The whole body of the rogue is often an outward revelation of the inward wickedness. The slouch of the shoulder, the hang of the head, the shuffle of the feet, go with long-indulged depravity.

**14. In his heart.** The heart of the sinner is perverted so that every thought, every imagination, is tainted with evil. The wicked man is not content to remain wicked himself, but seeks always to draw others into the same trouble that he is in. The amount of time and energy expended in devising mischief, if diverted to gainful employment, would assure him a steady and

honest living. However, he seems to be obsessed with the need to think up ever-new schemes for the discomfiture of others.

**15. His calamity come.** Because the wicked man has devoted his mind, his body, and his time so completely to evil, his case eventually becomes hopeless. Good impulses have been resisted so long that they have no further power to inspire, and he is broken, without remedy.

**17. A proud look.** Self-exaltation prevents a man from confessing his sin and humbling his soul before God. As long as it persists, salvation is impossible. The proud man is barred from the gates of life just as surely as if God hated him (see Job 21:22; Ps. 18:27; PP 37).

**A lying tongue.** Our God is a God of truth. Lies cannot harm Him, for He knows all things; but lies can bring great mischief upon His children. The lies of Satan deceived a multitude of angels and robbed heaven of one third of its inhabitants. The same lies turned a happy world into a dreary battlefield upon which most men meet eternal defeat (Rev. 12:4, 7–9). God hates the lies that turn men and women from Him and bring them into the cruel bondage of Satan.

**Innocent blood.** Murderous hands, a heart overflowing with evil, and feet swift to do mischief are the more active forms of attack upon the innocent (see Gen. 6:5; Isa. 59:7).

**19. A false witness.** A false witness is a lying tongue that brings unfounded accusations. It is this type of lying that is expressly forbidden by the ninth commandment (Ex. 20:16). Perjury is used to shelter the wrongdoer as well as to oppress the innocent. When justice is perverted by such conniving, it works havoc in a community, both by the direct harm it does and by creating a cynical contempt for law and order.

**Soweth discord.** Last comes the one who takes a delight in stirring up strife. Some of these mischief-makers tell no lies, yet they produce as much commotion and disharmony as does a liar.

**21. About thy neck.** Solomon reverts to his warning against strange women (v. 24; cf. ch. 5:3). To keep from yielding to such temptation a man must be on his guard day and night. The good instruction of father and mother must be kept ever in mind.

**23. The law is light.** Those who regard the law as an arbitrary forbidding of desirable pleasures have an entirely perverted idea. The law is a lamp to enlighten the mind and show the way of happiness, peace, and eternal life (see Ps. 19:8; 119:105).

**24. Flattery.** A flattering tongue, coquettish eyes, and beauty of face may combine to turn a young man's head and lead to the dread consequences, ranging from poverty to death, that Solomon proceeds to relate.

**27. Fire in his bosom.** There is no circumstance that can ever make adultery or fornication right. As fire always burns, so an invasion of another's home will always bring a blight upon the lives of all concerned (2 Sam. 11–13; PP 723, 727, 728, 737).

**30. Despise a thief.** Hunger is often regarded as sufficient motive for minor theft, and men may condone the deed, even if they insist upon restoration or even punishment. But adultery imparts a taint that honest men can never forget. It is a sin against a possession that men hold dear, a possession that is sadly depreciated by such a crime. Even if righteousness does not hold back a man from the horrible pitfall of this crime, the consequences of the deed should deter the tempted, hence the emphasis upon the inexorable and implacable nature of the desire for vengeance that is aroused.

**32. Lacketh understanding.** A man of understanding will carefully weigh the consequences of an act lest by indulgence he bring loss to himself, or lifelong disgrace and shame. The thief who steals because he is hungry has at least a semblance of an excuse for his deed, but even he suffers for his deed (v. 30). But the adulterer can show no necessity for his conduct. Besides, the pleasure he thinks sensual gratification will bring him quickly turns to remorse.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

6 CG 58; Ed 117  
6–8CG 59; CT 190; 4T 455  
9 ML 143  
9–114T 411  
28 Ed 136; MH 443  
32 AH 327

### CHAPTER 7

1 *Solomon persuadeth to a sincere and kind familiarity with wisdom.* 6 *In an example of his own experience, he sheweth* 10 *the cunning of an whore,* 22 *and the desperate simplicity of a young wanton.* 24 *He dehortheth from such wickedness.*

**1. Keep my words.** That is, obey me.

**2. Apple of thine eye.** Literally, “the pupil of thine eye.” A figure of extreme preciousness. The LXX has the following introduction to v.: 2: “My son, honour the Lord, and thou shalt be strong; and fear none but him.”

**3. Upon thy fingers.** Hence always within view and serving as a constant reminder (see Deut. 6:8; 11:18).

**4. My sister.** A symbol of intimate association. “Kinswoman” may also imply obligation (see Ruth 2:1; 3:2).

**5. They may keep.** LXX, “she [wisdom] may keep.”

**Strange woman.** See on ch. 2:16; cf. ch. 6:24.

**6. I looked.** The LXX represents the woman as looking through the window of her house, scanning the passers-by for a likely victim. However, from the context it seems more natural to retain the reading of the Hebrew.

The writer chooses to use a concrete illustration rather than to speak in abstract generalities, and thus adds to the force of his instruction. He may have reported an actual case or related a parable.

**Casement.** The windows of ancient Oriental houses were not covered with glass, as those of our modern houses are, but with a latticework or trelliswork of wood that enabled the occupant of the house to see outside, while the vision from the outside was obscured. The arrangement worked somewhat like our Venetian blinds; it shut out the sunlight but permitted the breezes to pass through.

**9. Black and dark night.** Literally, “in the pupil [of the eye] of night and darkness.” The pupil is the dark, central part of the eye. The pupil of the night evidently refers to the period of total darkness between the evening twilight and the dawn of day.

The young man erred when he thus placed himself in the way of temptation. He may have had no deliberate intention of sinning, but he took pleasure in venturing on the borders of transgression. His case is typical of that of many moral offenders today, who, while permitting indiscreet associations, have no intention of selling their soul to base lust. Suddenly they find themselves in a snare from which they seem powerless to extricate themselves. They should have positively repulsed the first prompting of evil. “Touch not; taste not; handle not” (Col. 2:21) is the only safe course to pursue in these matters. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

**10. There met him.** The fact that the woman was abroad at this time of the night gives an indication of her character. In the East females of good repute were kept secluded and would not

normally leave the confines of a home at night, certainly not unattended.

**11. *She is loud.*** Verses 11 and 12 describe the character of the woman in general, not necessarily her conduct on this occasion. She was not one of the “keepers at home” that Paul commended (Titus 2:5).

**14. *Peace offerings.*** In this kind of offering the animal offered was divided between the priest and the offerer (see Lev. 7:11–19). The woman claims to have paid her vows that day and now to be celebrating a feast in her home to which she invites the foolish youth.

**15. *Seek thy face.*** She is attempting to convince her dupe that she was particularly looking for him and esteemed him highly.

**19. *The goodman.*** Literally, “the man.” The husband is meant. “Goodman” is an archaic word meaning “master of the house,” or “husband” (see Matt. 20:11).

***Not at home.*** A strong element of temptation is introduced—the idea of safety from discovery. Without the restraint imposed by fear of detection and punishment, the condition of society would be much worse than it is. Few in these days are restrained by the working of the Holy Spirit upon the heart (see Gen. 6:5). In this degenerate age, when man is weak and sin is strong, the people of God must make wisdom and understanding their close companions and draw so near to the Saviour that the very thought of sin will be quickly expelled from the mind (2 Cor. 10:5).

However, sin that is avoided merely through fear of detection still pollutes the soul (see on Matt. 5:28). In this statement from the Sermon on the Mount Jesus does not mean to imply that temptation itself is sin. But if the condition of the soul is such that the tempted one would indulge in the sin if he had the opportunity, that condition itself is sin. Sin is lack of conformity with the law of God, whether in act, disposition, or state. Someone has aptly remarked that character may be evaluated by what a man would do if he knew that he would never be found out.

**21. *Much fair speech.*** Literally, “abundant instruction.” The adulteress evidently used a carefully planned line of argument.

**22. *To the slaughter.*** Frequently oxen walk contentedly to the slaughterhouse and are stupidly undisturbed in the face of death.

***As a fool.*** The complete clause reads literally, “as fetters to the correction of a fool” (although there is no certainty that “fetters” is the correct translation of *Ôekes*). *ÔEkes* is found elsewhere only in Isa. 3:18, where it is translated “tinkling ornaments.” It is difficult to ascertain the meaning of the Hebrew of this verse. The translation of the KJV is obtained by a transposition of two nouns. The ancient versions disagree with the Hebrew and do not all agree among themselves. The LXX for this and the first clause of the following verse reads, “and as a dog to bonds, or as a hart shot in the liver with an arrow.” The Vulgate has, “As a frisking lamb, and not knowing that as a fool he is being dragged to bondage.”

**25. *To her ways.*** The only safe course is promptly to repel the first insinuations of evil and to avoid placing oneself in the way of temptation (see Gen. 39:13; 1 Cor. 6:18). One who finds himself already entangled should immediately set about to break free from the cords that bind him. All must guard against undue familiarity (5T 591–603).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 Ed 179

2 Ev 240, 244; LS 96; 5T 353; 6T 225

22 5T 602

26 PP 457

## CHAPTER 8

1 *The fame*, 6 *and evidency of wisdom*. 10 *The excellency*, 12 *the nature*, 15 *the power*, 18 *the riches*, 22 *and the eternity of wisdom*. 32 *Wisdom is to be desired for the blessedness it bringeth*.

**1. Wisdom cry.** Wisdom is pictured as a woman crying out to all men (see ch. 1:20–23). On every hand, God has placed inducements to lead men to think of the ways of righteousness and to seek understanding (Prov. 8:2; cf. 2 Peter 3:9).

**4. O men.** Two different Hebrew words are used in this verse for “man”: The first one, *Ōish*, refers to man as a male and implies such masculine qualities as strength and individuality; the second one, *Ōadam*, is used of mankind in general, all the sons of Adam and, often, the daughters too. Wisdom calls both to men who have already established in themselves a degree of wisdom and experience and who have developed their individuality, and to those who are still allowing themselves to be swept along by the mass of humanity, with little concern as to where they are going.

**5. Simple.** Heb. *pethaŌim*, a term that includes those who have not yet given their hearts to know wisdom, but are still uncommitted to evil. They are still in the valley of decision, ready to be influenced by good or evil. It includes those also who are easily enticed. By contrast, the “fools” are those who have actively resisted the call of wisdom and are hence more difficult to win to the way of life (see ch. 1:7).

**6. Excellent things.** Heb. *negidim*, literally, “princely things.” Elsewhere *nagid* is rendered “ruler,” “chief,” “prince,” etc. Wisdom will speak things that befit a ruler. One of the weaknesses of our times is that princes and rulers often speak things that are far from right (Eze. 22:25–28). When those who should set an example of nobility come down and join the mass of men in ignoble pursuits, the general level of the nation sinks.

**8. Nothing froward.** The words of true wisdom contain nothing that is perverted. In this day, when science holds so much more honored a position than goodness, when wisdom is less sought than knowledge, those who are esteemed as wise men often speak words that are far from right. This is due to the fact that their basic philosophy, their outlook upon life, is determined by false theories as to right and wrong. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” and those who reject their belief in a personal God and in an absolute standard of behavior are not wise (Ps. 14:1; 1 Tim. 6:20, 21; 2 Peter 3:3–5).

**9. All plain.** The humblest Christian who accepts the revelation of God in His Word has a foundation for belief that is as firm as the throne of God. He may well be considered to have developed a better understanding of the real nature of the universe than the wisest unbeliever (see Ps. 25:14; 1 Cor. 2:14; PK 31).

**11. Than rubies.** Compare ch. 3:14, 15.

**12. Witty inventions.** Heb. *mezimmoth*. All previous occurrences of this word (chs. 1:4; 2:11; 3:21; 5:2) have been translated “discretion.” There is no valid reason to depart from this definition here. *Mezimmah* comes from the root *zamam*, which means “to consider,” “to purpose,” “to devise.” This verse begins a long section in which wisdom extols her high value.

**13. Pride.** When the true relation between the eternal, high, and holy God and the sinful mortal heart is realized, there is no place for pride.

**15. Kings reign.** Early expositors took these words as applying to Christ. There seems to be a transition somewhere in this chapter from a personification of wisdom as an abstract quality to Christ’s being personified by the figure of wisdom. There is no verification of such a transition by a direct quotation from this chapter in the NT, although in Rev. 3:14 there is an allusion to the



LXX translation of Prov. 8:22 that would tend to equate the speakers of these respective passages. It is true that many of the attributes the speaker of Prov. 8 ascribes to himself are descriptive also of the work and nature of Christ. However, Inspiration must remain the guide as to which sections of the passage can be positively regarded as having an application also, or perhaps exclusively, to Christ (see TM 200; 1T 396, 397; Ed 142; PP 34; DA 764; see on Deut. 18:15).

The statement, “by me kings reign,” is true equally of Christ as of wisdom. The Bible makes it clear that there is no power apart from God and that the length of time a ruler retains authority is determined by an overruling providence (Dan. 2:20, 21; 4:17; Rom. 13:1; cf. PK 535).

**17. That love me.** Christ said that He and His Father would love those who loved Him (John 14:21). The problem of the love of an unchanging God apparently turning to hatred of those who reject or who hate Him is dealt with in previous chapters (Prov. 1:26–31; 6:16–19).

**Seek me early.** This means to seek so diligently that one rises early in the morning to press the search. Because of the distractions of worldly affairs, and the deceitfulness of the human heart, persevering diligence is required to maintain a saving relationship with true wisdom and with God.

**18. Riches and honour.** Wisdom claims to have with her three rich rewards to be shared with those who seek her. The riches that wisdom offers are durable riches. They include the imperishable treasures that are laid up only in heaven (Matt. 6:19–21). The lives of some of the world-famous philanthropists have demonstrated that wealth accumulated and used in right ways can be stable and satisfying even here upon earth, but to many, material prosperity becomes a snare (see 1 Tim. 6:9, 17, 18).

Honor is almost as highly prized by mankind as are riches. But human honor is an intangible reward and external to the individual. Wisdom offers honor with God (see 1 Sam. 2:30).

**Righteousness.** A priceless, heavenly prize. The power of the Saviour is promised to all who seek goodness. This power makes it possible for a sinful human being to follow the good counsel of wisdom. Righteousness is an inward reward made evident in outward behavior (1 Cor. 1:30).

**19. My fruit.** The natural law that like begets like works also in spiritual things. If a man sows wisdom, he will reap the good consequences of wisdom (Prov. 8:8; Gal. 6:7, 8). Whenever the soul is surrendered, goodness flows forth from the life.

**20. Midst of the paths.** Wisdom leads down the center of the road of life, avoiding all extremes. Man cannot stray to the right hand or the left without her voice saying, “This is the way” (Prov. 4:27; Isa. 30:21). When that voice is heeded, the treasure that awaits in heaven becomes more real and its inheritance more sure with every day’s march.

This passage is equally plain when applied to Christ. Christ has gone before us and marked out for us the path of righteousness and judgment. In the days before the cross He spoke through patriarchs and prophets (1 Peter 1:11). All the symbolism of the Mosaic ritual law pointed to the coming of the One who would cleanse the sinner from his sinfulness.

Even if there were no eternal life to gain, it would still be the part of wisdom to walk in the way of righteousness. Not all men have much substance in the way of worldly possessions, but all good men can possess real treasures of peace and contentment, which are, after all, the greatest gain (1 Tim. 6:6).

**22. The Lord possessed me.** The meaning of vs. 22 to 31 has been the cause of much discussion through the centuries. The LXX has the following introduction to the subject: “If I declare to you the things that daily happen, I will remember also to recount the things of old.”

There is an obvious parallel in this passage to the work of the second person of the Godhead

(see PP 34). However, the passage is allegorical, and caution must be exercised not to press an allegory beyond what the original writer had in mind. Interpretations derived must always be in harmony with the analogy of Scripture.

Some have sought to find support here for the view that there was a time when Christ was not in existence, and that He was created, or brought forth, by the Father as the beginning of His work of establishing an orderly and inhabited universe. Dogmatic conclusions from figurative, parabolic passages are unjustified. The misleading results of such a course may be demonstrated in the popular interpretation of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). Verification of doctrinal beliefs should always be sought in the literal statements of the Bible. For literal statements on the subject under discussion see Micah 5:2; John 1:1; 8:54; cf. DA 24. Compare also the following: “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived” (DA 530). “The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father” (EGW RH April 5, 1906). “Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God. ... He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God” (Ev 615; see also DA 19, 24, 25).

In the light of these statements the reading of modern translations that depart from the Hebrew to follow the LXX and read “created” instead of “possessed” (for example, RSV), can lead to unwarranted conclusions.

While there is doubtless a reference to Christ, He is presented in the figure of wisdom. For another illustration of such blending of application see Eze. 28, where the “prince of Tyrus” is, in part, presented as a figure for Satan.

**23. Set up.** Heb. *nasak*, a word that has several meanings: (1) “to pour out,” as drink offerings (1 Chron. 11:18); (2) “to weave” (Isa. 25:7); (3) “to set,” “to install,” as obviously here.

**24. Brought forth.** Heb. *chil*, “to writhe” and “to tremble”; in a few cases, “to bring forth [as a child].” *Chil* is used in Ps. 90:2 for the forming of the earth. Here it is used in a metaphorical sense to refer to wisdom.

**27. I was there.** Whether the preparation of the heavens is regarded as referring to the separation of the waters below and above to form the firmament (Gen. 1:6–8) or to the making of the starry heavens (John 1:3; Col. 1:16, 17), wisdom was there.

**Compass.** Literally, “circle.”

**28. The clouds.** Job was challenged to explain the balancing of the clouds (Job 37:16). Through the accumulated knowledge of science, men now understand in part how the multiplied millions of tons of rain in the clouds are held up and what causes the rain to fall. It was divine wisdom that established the conditions that govern the distribution of rain and snow.

**30. One brought up.** Heb. *Ōamon*. There is much uncertainty as to the exact meaning of this word. Jewish tradition assigns to it the definition “workmaster,” “foreman.” Others propose the meaning “fondling,” “minion,” “foster child.”

**31. Sons of men.** Man was the crowning work of the Creator (PP 44). While God loves and cares for the animal creation, it was but part of the environment of Adam and Eve. Animals may be sagacious, but they cannot know the wisdom that is the fear of the Lord. God could find His image reflected only in man. Hence special delight and interest was shown in him (see Heb. 2:7, 8).

The delights of wisdom are also with the sons of men. Man is privileged to enter into the thoughts of God. He can find the Creator’s glory written upon every leaf and shining in every star.

Through association with his Maker and through the instruction of holy angels in Eden (see PP 50) Adam grew to comprehend more and more of the infinite wisdom of God. Even today, when

minds are darkened by sin and the faculties of perception are weakened, there is still great satisfaction to be gained in the reverent study of the thoughts of God as expressed in nature and in revelation. Earthly pleasures can never bring the abiding serenity that is conferred by heavenly wisdom (see Ed 21, 27).

**32. O ye children.** The LXX reads “[my] son.” This version does not have the remainder of this verse, nor v. 33.

In view of the blessings of wisdom it would be folly to close the ears to the call of wisdom. Compare the statement of Christ in which He turned aside an attempt to exalt His mother and affirmed that blessing or happiness comes from heeding the word of God (Luke 11:28).

**33. Hear instruction.** The Bible is full of instruction. All its laws, provisions, and requirements represent an adaptation of divine wisdom to the needs of men. To follow such instruction ensures life here and in the age to come. Hence, those who regard divine law as an infringement upon man’s liberty of action bring upon themselves the charge of foolishness.

**34. Watching daily.** Many pictures are suggested by this verse. Some see eager students waiting for an honored teacher to come out to resume their instruction, others see Levites guarding the doors of the Temple, still others are reminded of a lover waiting long hours in the hope of catching a glimpse of his beloved. All emphasize the necessity of making a deliberate effort to begin each day under the direction of divine wisdom. Man stands in dire need of this wisdom (James 1:5).

**35. Life.** Eternal life is the reward of the diligent search for wisdom, eternal death the penalty for failure (see 1 John 5:11, 12). The successful search for wisdom means the surrender of self to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (see John 16:13). Such a surrender makes it possible for God to work upon us and for us the wonders of His grace. To give the same blessings to the unsundered would be as dangerous as to give a gleaming razor to a child.

**36. Love death.** Because the outcome of life is the consequence of the attitude taken toward saving knowledge, a rejection of wisdom is the condemnation of the soul to eternal death. The call of wisdom is heard by every man many times throughout his life, and much of the suffering of the finally impenitent will be remorse as they realize that they have themselves chosen the annihilation that is soon to come upon them (see DA 764; GC 668).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

7 ML 331  
8 Ed 69  
13 PK 34  
14 TM 200  
17 CG 491; CT 330; 1T 397  
18 Ed 142; 3T 540; 6T 258  
22, 23, 29, 30 PP 34  
31 CH 455; PK 211; 5T 195  
36 DA 764

## CHAPTER 9

1 *The discipline, 4 and doctrine of wisdom.* 13 *The custom, 16 and error of folly.*

**1. Buildd her house.** Interpretations that make the house a representation of the incarnation of Christ or of the church, the symbolical body of Christ, or of the schools of the

prophets, in which wisdom resided, represent unauthorized allegorical deductions. It is sufficient to see in this “house” a poetic figure personifying wisdom and representing her as dwelling in a place at whose doors the eager searcher for truth waits (see ch. 8:34).

**Seven pillars.** These have been the subject of much conjecture. Seven frequently denotes completeness. Consequently, the house of wisdom may be said to be fully and perfectly built and firmly supported, since the pillars are of hewn stone. But to find a representation for each of these pillars is to indulge in conjecture.

**2. Her table.** Wisdom is represented as having prepared a great feast. In warm climates animals had to be slaughtered just before the time for the feast, for the flesh quickly decayed.

**3. Her maidens.** By poetic figure, because “wisdom” is feminine, her servants are also represented in the feminine.

**4. Is simple.** Only those who recognize their lack of understanding respond to the invitation. The others decline because of empty confidence in their own superiority.

**5. Bread.** A slight change in figure from flesh and wine (v. 2) to bread and wine, not necessarily a change in representation.

**6. Forsake the foolish.** A probably more correct literal rendering is “Forsake, O ye simple ones.” But such a construction lacks an object. Some follow the LXX, which renders the clause, “Leave folly.” Also, instead of “and live” the LXX reads, “that ye may reign forever.”

Only as men separate from the ways and the company of those who reject the appeals of their Saviour is it possible for them to live a full and satisfying life. Heeding the call of wisdom and partaking of her bread and wine give rich rewards both in this present life and in the world to come (see John 6:51).

**7. Shame.** Wisdom interrupts her counsel to those who recognize their need, to explain why she addresses only the simple instead of casting pearls of truth before the obdurate (see Matt. 7:6). When a man is known to hold religion in derision, any attempt to correct him is likely to be met with such a tirade of abuse that the result can be only harm for all concerned. The experience leaves the Christian shamed and the sinner more hardened than ever. Such men are often more easily reached by the indirect appeal of the consistent, humble life of some Christian (see Matt. 5:16).

**9. Give instruction.** The Hebrew says only, “Give.” The context, however, shows that it is advice that is to be given to the wise man. The LXX reads, “Give an opportunity,” thus emphasizing the idea that the wise man makes full use of every opportunity.

Though there is danger that the scornful man will be hardened into greater sin by an ill-advised rebuke, the wise man realizes the value of knowing how others regard him, and is glad of counsel even when it takes the form of reproof (Ps. 141:5). Hence sound advice to a wise man brings a double reward: it helps the recipient and wins for the counselor the friendship of the one whom he has reproved.

**10. The holy.** Heb. *qedoshim*, a plural which some regard as a “plural of majesty,” and hence they apply the expression to God. The Hebrew parallelism of this verse supports such an application. The LXX, however, regards *qedoshim* as an ordinary plural noun and renders the second part of the verse thus, “The counsel of saints is understanding, for to know the law is [the character] of good thought.” See PP 596 for a quotation of this verse capitalizing “holy,” italicizing the phrase, “the knowledge of the holy,” and adding this comment, “a knowledge of God is the foundation of all true education.”

**11. Thy days.** Wisdom returns to her statement of the reasons why the simple should come to the feast. Long life is offered as a reward for wisdom and the fear of God (see chs. 3:2, 16;

4:10; 10:27).

**12. For thyself.** Though the results of foolish ways and opposition to God are shared by many innocent sufferers and the blessings of a good life extend to many others, it still remains true that wisdom and folly primarily affect the one who practices them. Happiness and length of life in this world and eternal life or eternal death in the age to come are personal rewards, as also is the remorse felt in the judgment (Eze. 18:4; Matt. 12:36).

**13. A foolish woman.** In contrast with the call of the good woman, who represents wisdom, Solomon presents the noisy, passionate call of folly. Every man must make his choice between these two.

**Simple.** The word is here obviously used in a bad sense as denoting a lack of moral fiber (see on ch. 8:5). The woman knows nothing that she ought to know. The LXX has a different reading, “A foolish and bold woman, who knows not modesty, comes to want a morsel.”

**14. High places.** Wisdom sent her maidens through the city and cried from the highest places (v. 3). Folly sits at her door in haughty, overdressed splendor and calls to those as foolish as herself.

**15. Passengers.** Literally, “the ones passing over the way.” “Passengers” is here used with its Old English meaning of “a passer-by,” “a wayfarer.”

**17. Stolen waters.** The feast that folly offers consists only of stolen waters and the bread of secrets in contrast with the satisfying food prepared by wisdom (see on ch. 5:15).

**18. The dead.** Heb. *repha’im*. See on Job 26:5. Unlike the well-built, stone-pillared house of wisdom, full of light and air, the establishment maintained by folly is a gloomy, secretive abode haunted by the memory of those who have died, dupes of her temptations.

**Hell.** Heb. *she’ol*, the figurative abode of the dead (see on ch. 15:11).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

10 AH 324, 386; CD 29; CH 222; CT 50, 65, 364; Ed 13; FE 85, 115, 258, 285, 358, 392; GC 80; MH 409; ML 106, 284; MM 34, 165; PP 596, 651, 739; RC 54; Te 156; 3T 491; 4T 27, 273, 337, 553; 5T 322, 439, 587; 8T 63 (More under Ps. 111:10.)  
18 PP 461

## CHAPTER 10

*From this chapter to the five and twentieth are sundry observations of moral virtues, and their contrary vices.*

**1. Proverbs of Solomon.** This chapter begins a long section of brief proverbs more or less independent of one another. There is some kind of grouping apparent at times, but in general there is little consecutive thought. Because many of the proverbs stand alone, this section is contrasted with the coherent sections that make up the first part of the book.

Some connection between this series of proverbs and the previous sections may be observed by considering these proverbs as demonstrations of the two highly differentiated ways of life described in the preceding chapters and as statements of the principles that govern these ways. The antithetical form of Hebrew poetry, that is, the one in which the second part of the verse is in sharp contrast with the first (see p. 24), is the one commonly employed in these proverbs. Verse 1 is an illustration of this form of parallelism.

**Heaviness.** The intended contrast is not between diversified reactions of the father and the mother. Both rejoice in the child who walks in the way of wisdom, both are grieved and weighed

down when a child seeks after folly (see chs. 13:1; 15:20; 23:24).

**2. Treasures of wickedness.** These treasures do not profit because the only profit really worth gaining is eternal life, and no amount of gold will purchase that (Matt. 16:26).

**Righteousness.** Moral and ethical goodness that not merely concerns itself with avoiding the pollution of sin, but exercises itself in the maintenance of equitable treatment of others, in deeds of kindness and help when needed (see Matt. 25:40–46).

**3. Casteth away.** God promises that bread and water shall be sure to the righteous, and that all needs will be supplied to those who seek His kingdom (Isa. 33:16; Matt. 6:33), but He cannot bless the desires of those who oppose or neglect the way of salvation. The withdrawal of blessing is not in revenge. The troubles God permits to come upon men are intended to awaken them to their true position and secure their salvation (see Haggai 1:5–11; PP 109, 325, 326).

**Substance.** Heb. *hawwah*, translated “mischievous desire” in Micah 7:3 and “naughtiness” in Prov. 11:6. Here “desire,” or “mischievous desire,” is probably the intended meaning.

**4. A slack hand.** Laziness and inefficiency frequently go together and can be counted on to produce poverty. No employer can be expected to be pleased with the worker who displays these characteristics. On the other hand, diligence is usually combined with efficiency. The verse presents a vivid contrast between these two types of workers.

**5. Sleepeth.** Heb. *radam*, the word for heavy sleep, not for mere dozing. A lazy son is a shame at any time, but indolence in harvesttime is so utterly inexcusable that it brings contempt upon both son and father. The folly of sleep in time of crisis is even more tragic when spiritual matters are in question. To wake up and realize that the opportunity for salvation is past will force from human lips the saddest words ever to be uttered, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (Jer. 8:20).

**6. Blessings.** The plural emphasizes the fullness of the blessing to be reaped by the just. Because of his kindly deeds, many are led to call down blessings upon his head (see v. 7; ch. 31:28).

**Violence covereth.** As translated by the KJV, this clause seems to declare that the wicked man must keep his mouth closed because the guilty memory of his evil prevents his speaking out. The sentence may also be translated, “The mouth of the wicked concealeth violence.” The meaning then becomes, “By fair words the wicked man covers up his evil plans” (see ch. 26:24).

**7. The memory of the just.** It is not that evil men are forgotten, but rather that they are remembered with fear or loathing, while the memory of good men is recalled with pleasure (see Ps. 72:17). Thus the memory of the wicked is well compared with offensive corruption.

**8. A prating fool.** Literally, “a fool of lips.” The wise man controls his speech and is willing to listen to instruction and to accept direction. The fool talks idly, boasting of his own deeds and speaking evil of others. Since he is too busy talking to listen to counsel, he will fall, and come to ruin.

**9. Uprightly.** The LXX renders this word “simply.” The simple goodness of the righteous man arms him against Satan’s temptations and disarms the envy and malice of other men (see Isa. 33:15, 16).

**Shall be known.** The one who turns aside to walk in crooked paths, whether in relation to God or to man, is certain to be exposed. Many are discovered and punished in this life. Those who escape detection will have their wicked course laid bare in the day when God reveals the secrets of men’s hearts (Luke 12:2, 3).

**10. He that winketh.** A wink may seem to be innocent enough, but it often typifies sly evil (see ch. 6:13). Mischief follows the crafty malice of the covert evildoer, and the innocent victims

suffer sorrow. The prating fool represents a silly, self-exposing sinner who quickly comes to grief.

**11. A well of life.** Or, “a fountain of life.” Words of wisdom, counsel, and edification flow out of the mouth of the good. Like a refreshing stream these words, if received and heeded by others, bring new life and growth. It is an honor for the righteous to be so described, for God Himself is said to be a fountain of living waters (Ps. 36:9; Jer. 2:13; cf. John 4:14; 7:38).

**12. Hatred stirreth up strifes.** Love and hatred are here brought into sharp contrast. Hatred motivates those who deliberately make trouble between others by talebearing (Jer. 20:10, 11; 5T 94, 241, 242). On the other hand, love forgives and forgets; love puts aside all the bitterness that may have been suffered, and is ready to return good for evil (Matt. 5:9; 6:12; 1 Cor. 13:4–7; 1 Peter 4:8; 1 John 2:9–11).

**13. Void of understanding.** Literally, “one in want of heart.” The heart was regarded as the seat of intelligence. The unintelligent brings a rod upon his back in many ways: his conscience gives him no peace from its scourging, he suffers tongue-lashings from many of those with whom he has to deal, and anciently literal floggings by the order of magistrates were his (chs. 19:29; 26:3). The LXX combines the two elements in this verse thus: “He that brings forth wisdom from his lips smites the fool with a rod.”

**14. Lay up knowledge.** A wise man learns from everyone he meets and from every experience of life. It is his pleasure as well as habit to seize upon each new piece of knowledge and to seek to fit it into his total fund of information. As a result he is equipped with knowledge and wisdom to meet unexpected emergencies (see Matt. 13:52). The foolish man has the opposite experience. He despises knowledge and understanding. What he is forced to learn he makes no effort to remember. As a natural consequence he is ill-equipped to meet life’s problems.

**15. The poor.** Heb. *dallim*, a word that describes the poor as low, helpless, reduced, downcast, and ignorant. In countries outside of Israel the poor were left to shift for themselves and to sink ever lower in the social scale. In Israel the restrictions upon land sale and the provisions of the jubilee and seventh-year statutes were designed to prevent both abject poverty and the accumulation of land (Lev. 25:1–55).

Poverty need not be the ruin of a family. Those who set about to use all their abilities will be blessed by God and will usually be able to provide for a reasonably comfortable way of life. Unfortunately, poverty often saps the energy and destroys the confidence of the poor, so that many of them fall into despair.

**16. Tendeth to life.** The rich compensations of honest labor are contrasted with the frustrating rewards of a life of sin.

**17. He is in.** The words “is in” are supplied. The sentence may also be translated, “the man who keeps instruction is a way to life.” This would seem to indicate that his wise counsel and good example make the wise man a guide, directing others in their pursuit of life. On the other hand, the translation of the KJV makes an equally true observation.

**Erreth.** The form of this verb in the Hebrew is causative, suggesting that the one who refuses to heed instruction and reproof leads others astray.

**18. Lying lips.** The first sentence may also be translated, “He who concealeth hatred is of lying lips.” The one who harbors hatred in his heart frequently practices deception and dissimulation.

As it stands this verse is an example of synthetic parallelism (see p. 24). The construction is unnatural in a series of antithetic parallelisms. The LXX preserves this latter construction by its reading, “Righteous lips cover enmity; but they that utter railings are most foolish.”

**19. Multitude of words.** The tongue is a difficult member to control and has tremendous

potentialities for both good and evil (James 3:1–10). A tongue permitted to utter a multitude of words is in danger of leading its owner into many forms of sin. Exaggeration frequently accompanies verbosity, and exaggeration is a falsification of truth. Scandal and defamation are not far from one who talks much and seeks to make a sensation. The wise man screens carefully everything that he says, and remembers that one day he will have to give account for his words (see Eccl. 5:1–3; Matt. 12:36; James 3:2; 4T 331).

**20. Choice silver.** The contrast is between the words of a good man and the mind and heart of a fool. Although the wise man does not express all that is in his heart, what he does say is good. It comes from a pure source, and has been carefully evaluated before being uttered (see ch. 8:19).

The words of the wicked are of little value because the mind from which they come is perverse, carnal, and concerned only with temporal affairs.

**21. Lips of the righteous.** The utterances of the wise feed all who will listen. Those who will not pay any attention to wisdom not only fail to feed others; they starve themselves.

**22. The blessing of the Lord.** Some think that riches depend only upon skill and diligence; others, that they are the result of good fortune. But there can be no real and lasting wealth without the blessing of the Lord. There is no successful multiplication of wealth unless God works with man, and riches melt away when God does not add His blessing (see Haggai 1:5–9; Mal. 3:8–12).

**Addeth no sorrow.** Riches do not always bring happiness. A man must have health if he is to enjoy his wealth. Also death brings sorrow into every home, rich or poor. Riches without the blessing of God often cause sorrow by turning the heart of the owner from a preparation for the world to come to contentment and preoccupation with this world. But riches that come with the blessing of God come with no added sorrow. Wealth that is used as a trust from the heavenly Master blesses the faithful steward and those upon whom he expends it (see Eccl. 5:18, 19).

**23. To do mischief.** This verse may also be translated, “It is as sport [laugh] to the fool to carry out an evil intention, likewise to the wise man [to practice] wisdom.” One mark of a fool is that he delights to do evil. He knows the difference between right and wrong, but he has no deep feeling about moral rectitude and does not restrain his impulses to do mischief. His conscience has been so hardened that he seems to have no concern over the damage he is doing and the suffering he is causing.

In direct contrast, the man of understanding has allowed the Spirit of God to work upon his heart so freely that his conscience has become quick and tender. He is keenly aware of the consequences of his actions and takes delight in seeing that they all tend to the good of others (see Gal. 6:2).

**24. Fear of the wicked.** That is, the apprehension of calamity that haunts the wicked. Although many evildoers go along in their wicked pathway in apparent heedlessness of the inevitable results of their course, they are haunted, at times, by gloomy fears of the future. The fool seeks to dispel these fears and tries to make light of the prospect before him, but it is still there.

The wicked man can never have his full desire. What he wants is to go his own way and yet be happy. He wants to sow evil and yet reap good. But this can never be. It is the very nature of sin that it inevitably brings misery and death, however long the coming of the penalty may be delayed (see James 1:15).

The good man desires to be regenerated so that he may do good and be good. It is his purpose to walk in the way of life and happiness. The more he so desires, the easier it is for God to grant him his desires. Happiness is as inevitable a consequence of righteousness as sorrow is of sin (see



Gal. 6:7).

**25. As the whirlwind passeth.** The LXX translates the first clause, “when the storm passes by, the ungodly vanishes away.” When the tempest of calamity has passed, the wicked are gone, but the righteous are unmoved (see Job 21:18; Isa. 17:12–14).

**Vinegar.** The product that results when wine undergoes a fermentation by which the alcohol in the wine changes into acetic acid. The product was thought to be injurious to the teeth. The LXX here reads, “As a sour grape is hurtful to the teeth.”

**As smoke.** In Solomon’s day, men were well acquainted with the sting of wood smoke in the eyes, for stoves and chimneys as we have them seem to have been unknown. Similarly annoying is the slothful messenger who is dilatory in carrying out his errand. The LXX renders the last clause, “so iniquity hurts those that practice it.”

**27. Prolongeth days.** Compare Ex. 20:12; Ps. 91:16; Prov. 3:2; 9:11. The promise of longevity is conditional. The history of human experience reveals many exceptions. Yet a good life, lived in the fear of the Lord, so that the anxieties that break down the nervous forces are excluded by a living experience of faith, naturally tends to longevity (see MH 281). Similarly, a life without faith, whether actively sinful or not, tends to be shortened by fretfulness and worry. Selfish indulgence contributes to the deterioration of life forces (see Ps. 107:17, 18). The question may be raised, How does the centenarian who has indulged in unhealthy practices throughout his long life attain to his great age in good health, while the conscientious observer of the rules of health may, at a much younger age, be able to keep himself in only fairly good health? The answer in part lies in the fact that men are born into the world with constitutions of varying virility inherited from their ancestors. Some inherit a constitution so hardy that they are able to abuse it throughout life, seemingly with impunity, while others must exercise great care in order to keep in reasonably good condition. Another factor is the childhood development and environment. These do much to build up or break down the constitution before a person is old enough to care for his own health (see 3T 140, 141).

**28. The hope.** Today the hope of the Christian is centered in the new earth, where every noble ambition, now so often thwarted, will be carried out, every pure delight enjoyed without the admixture of the slightest trace of sadness. Failure will be unknown, and every success will open the way to still greater achievements. Sad partings will never come to cloud the eyes. Farewells will cease to introduce long hours of anxious waiting (see Rev. 21:4; GC 675–678), for every journey will be safe and prosperous and lead to a happy return.

**The expectation.** The sinner has recurrent attacks of fear (see on v. 24), but he persuades himself that everything will come out well in the end even if he does deliberately defy God and live in conflict with the laws of life. God’s long-suffering accounts in part for his false hope. Because his iniquity is not immediately punished, and he is given a continued probation, the transgressor strengthens himself in his evil and presumes upon the goodness of God (see Eccl. 8:11; Rom. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).

At the very moment when the hope of the righteous is to be realized, the expectation of the wicked utterly perishes, leaving the sinner helpless and hopeless in the knowledge that it is forever too late to exchange his selfish mirage for the glorious certainties of those who were willing to surrender self.

**29. Strength.** Heb. *ma’ōoz*, “a place of refuge,” or “a means of refuge.” The way of the Lord forms a sure defense around those who serve Him (see Ps. 91:2; cf. Job 1:10). God foresees every attack of the enemy upon the righteous, and is able to counter each move, so as to bring victory to the righteous. The obdurate workers of iniquity forfeit God’s protection, and, deprived of their defense, are destroyed (see PP 325).

**30. Never be removed.** Solomon was speaking primarily of the condition of the two classes in this life, though his statement is true also regarding the future life. Though the righteous are continually being removed by death, and all the righteous together will be taken to heaven for the duration of the millennium (Rev. 20:1), still they are as surely established as the inheritors and owners of this earth as if they had never left it. Their removal in death is only a sleep, their visit to heaven no more than a brief stay in the Father's house before they take up their abode for eternity upon the earth. This world has never really ceased to be their home (see Isa. 45:18).

The wicked have set their hearts upon a worldly way of life. Their ideal of eternal life is an existence in which they may live as sensually and greedily as in this present life. The sinner would not be happy in God's presence. Heaven would hold no pleasure for him. He is shut out by his own unfitness for the holy environment (see SC 19, 20).

**31. Bringeth forth wisdom.** Literally, "beareth the fruit of wisdom." The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom as naturally as a good fruit tree produces fruit. The artificial attempt to expound wisdom, when it is lacking in the heart, fails as completely as an attempt to make one's light shine when there is no light (see Matt. 5:16).

**Cut out.** Perhaps the simile of a fruit-bearing tree is continued. The perverse tongue, which speaks only that which is twisted and evil, will be cut out as a diseased branch is pruned away by a husbandman (see Matt. 3:10; Matt. 12:36, 37).

**32. What is acceptable.** The good man consciously avoids words that might hurt or offend, because he realizes something of the suffering that is caused by words spoken carelessly or thoughtlessly as well as by malicious or mischievous words. Through the centuries this consideration has been part of the general fund of common sense. Recent studies in psychiatry reveal that the havoc wrought by the lips may, in many cases, be far greater, and the damage done much deeper, than had been suspected. Those who place themselves under the guardianship of Heaven's angels will receive strength to avoid offending in word or deed (see COL 341, 342).

**Speaketh frowardness.** "Speaketh" is a supplied word. We may supply "know," as in the previous clause, or simply "is." The bad man speaks evil as unconsciously as the good man speaks good words; for in both cases the utterances of the lips spring from the heart (see Matt. 12:34–37). But both also deliberately plan to speak in ways suited to their regenerate or unregenerate natures. The wicked man takes delight in tantalizing, and is careless of the harm he does. He uses perverse words in carrying out evil plans. How important it is, in view of these considerations, that every man who is striving for the mastery (1 Cor. 9:25) keep a close watch on his lips (1 Peter 3:10)!

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

4 CT 278; 4T 410; 5T 178, 180

9 3T 108

19 4T 331; 5T 437

20 AH 440

22 Ed 142; FE 233; MH 448; PK 60

27 ML 149; CH 28

## CHAPTER 11

**1. A false balance.** False balances and short measures of any kind are a mean form of theft against which God has given many strong warnings (see Lev. 19:35, 36; Deut. 25:13, 14). Such

theft bears more heavily upon the poor because of their meager resources.

There may have been standard weights and measures in the sanctuary against which commercial measures could be tested (see Ex. 30:13; Lev. 27:25). But civil authorities frequently failed to control robbery by means of off-standard measures. Prophets spoke against the abuses (Eze. 45:10; Amos 8:5; Micah 6:11). Some of the trouble was due to cupidity on the part of the buyer. Measures were filled to overflowing instead of being leveled off, but this did not represent generosity, since there was probably a false bottom to offset the heaping up at the top.

**A just weight.** Literally, “a perfect stone.” Stones were used as weights, and many traders had two sets, one for buying, which was overweight, the other for selling, which was underweight. The one who realizes that “the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich” (ch. 10:22), and has faith in the power of the Lord, will not join in such theft, whatever may be the cost to himself.

God does not require that a man give overweight in business. Such bounty may cause careless inexactitude in the seller and a desire on the part of the buyer to get more than he has paid for. Scrupulous care in commerce and a free-handed generosity in benevolence are most pleasing to God.

The greatest fraud in the history of the world was that perpetrated upon Eve and Adam by Satan (Gen. 3:1–6). The first lie sold misery and death to those who possessed eternal life and happiness under pretense that they were buying their way to a larger life. All lesser frauds throughout time have tended toward the same end for both deceiver and victim. Little wonder, then, that God hates deceit and loves just dealing!

**2. Then cometh shame.** Pride lay at the foundation of the first sin. When Lucifer became proud of his beauty and wisdom, sin mysteriously developed in his heart (see Eze. 28:11–19; PP 33–43; GC 492–504). Because he refused to give up his rebellion when its nature and consequences were pointed out to him, Lucifer began a long and unhappy history that will end at last in his being the object of universal contempt (Isa. 14:12–20). Disgrace comes early or late, but inexorably, to all who share in this sin of pride.

**With the lowly.** The humble man, with his willingness to learn and his confession of need of divine help, receives rich stores of grace. Quick to discern and to follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit, he has access to the foundation of heavenly wisdom (see Isa. 57:15; James 4:6).

**3. The integrity.** Heb. *tummah*, from the verb *tamam*, which means “to be complete,” “to be finished.” *Tummah* means “completeness,” or “perfection,” not in the sense of flawlessness, but in the sense that the development expected at any stage has been achieved. Thus Job was pronounced perfect (Job 1:1, 8), even though there were weaknesses in his experience, which adversity later revealed (see Job 40:2–5; 42:2–6).

**Guide them.** When a man has given his heart to his Saviour, when his only aim in life is to please God, then he need have no fear that he will be led astray (John 7:17; Isa. 30:21). On the other hand, the persistent disobedience of the sinner keeps him off the only way to life, leaves him unsheltered from trouble, and leads him into eternal destruction in the great consummation.

**4. Riches profit not.** The rich man seemingly holds many advantages because of his riches, apparently gets more license than the poor man, so that he builds up within himself the idea that his riches will buy the favor of God against a judgment to come. The terrible awakening of such men to their true position is vividly portrayed (see Isa. 2:20, 21; 10:1–4; Jer. 9:23; Matt. 19:23; James 5:1; Rev. 6:15). The unfaithful stewards will see the poor, whom they have oppressed and despised, enjoying the pleasures of righteousness in a life that will never end. Their regret at what they have lost will be inexpressible (see Luke 16:22, 23; GC 654, 655).

**5. The perfect.** Heb. *tamim*, from the same root as *tummah* (see on v. 3). *Tamim* is a

relative term, and must be understood in its context. Noah was said to be perfect (Gen. 6:9), yet he later proved susceptible to the weaknesses of the flesh (Gen. 9:21). The perfect are the mature Christians fully dedicated to the Lord, who though they have weaknesses to be overcome press on toward the mark (Phil. 3:12–15). The day will come when the work of eradicating all sin and selfishness from the redeemed will be complete, and the saints will be fully and permanently without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:27; TM 506).

**Shall direct.** Heb. *yashar*, “to make smooth,” “to make straight,” that is, free from obstacles. Righteousness makes the way even by removing all cause for stumbling. The temptations remain, but there is no response to them (see John 14:30; cf. DA 123; GC 623). In the same way, it is the desire for evil that causes the wicked man to find so much to stumble over that he finally falls never to rise again.

**6. Naughtiness.** This verse emphasizes the importance of the lesson of the previous verse by repeating the thought in other words. “Naughtiness” should probably be “evil desire” (see on ch. 10:3). It is his own wicked desire that snares the evil man.

**8. In his stead.** The truth of this proverb has repeatedly been demonstrated. The Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea, against which they planned to trap the helpless Israelites (Ex. 14:26–31). Mordecai escaped the gallows, but Haman, who prepared it, died thereon (Esther 7:10). Daniel came unharmed from the den of lions, but his accusers died there (Dan. 6:24). Similarly, the remnant of God’s people, who have been condemned to death by the united action of the whole wicked world led by the false christ, will suddenly find deliverance, and their pursuers, destruction (Rev. 13:15; GC 624–626, 635, 636, 654–656).

**9. Hypocrite.** Heb. *chaneph*, literally, “a profane, irreligious person.” The KJV translates the 13 occurrences of this word by “hypocrite” (Job 8:13; 13:16; etc.). The Vaticanus Manuscript of the LXX renders *chaneph* by *asebes*, “ungodly,” although the Greek translations made by Aquila and Symmachus and Theodotion in the early days of the Christian dispensation have *hupokrites*, “hypocrite.” The profane man, whether hypocritical or not, is often ready and willing to destroy his neighbor by falsehoods, insinuations, and slander. Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Prov. 18:21). The just and upright neighbor, with a knowledge of God and of the way of righteousness, will use that knowledge to escape from the snare. His reputation for righteousness will often be sufficient to deliver him from the false accusations of his enemy.

**10. The city rejoiceth.** Most people are happy to see the righteous man succeed. They know that he will use his wealth and power to help others, and so do not fear his advancement. But the wicked man gains his riches at the expense of others and uses his increasing power to oppress them. Little wonder, then, that the whole city should greet his demise with glad relief.

**11. Exalted.** Here is the reason for the rejoicing expressed in the previous verse. The actions of the righteous inhabitants exalt the city by winning the friendship of men of other cities and nations and by bringing the blessing of God upon the community. The selfish and mischievous deeds of the wicked stir up trouble in the city and bring the judgments of God and man upon the city. Had Lot been able to muster nine other righteous men, the sinful city of Sodom would have been spared (Gen. 18:20–32). The repentance of the men of Nineveh spared that city (Jonah 3:5–10; 4:11).

**12. Holdeth his peace.** The contrast between the first and second clauses of this verse suggests that the despising of the neighbor consists in uttering contemptuous and disparaging words. The word for “wisdom” here is *leb*, “heart.” The heart was considered to be the seat of the mind. Even if the neighbor has weaknesses that seem to justify the attack of the unintelligent, a wise man holds his peace. He realizes that every man has weaknesses, and every man is entitled

to be left to struggle with those difficulties without the additional burden of disturbing publicity (see Gal. 6:1, 2).

**13. A faithful spirit.** The man who goes about slandering his neighbors has no hesitation in revealing secrets that have been entrusted to him, if by so doing he can enhance the effect of his gossip. An irresistible urge to tell the things that others do not know seems to possess some people (see Ed 235, 236; 5T 58, 59). The faithful friend will resist every temptation to reveal a confidence, not only because he has promised to do so, but also because of his love for his friend and his unwillingness to do anything that will harm another.

**14. Counsel.** Heb. *tachbuloth*, probably originally derived from the idea of rope pulling, that is, the steering and directing of a ship by means of pulling a rope; hence the word has come to mean “direction,” “guidance,” or “counsel.” Where wise, skillful guidance is lacking, men, who themselves lack such wisdom, are easily diverted into paths that lead to difficulty and disaster. On the contrary, when there are many who possess the gift of government or wise counsel, free and frank discussions of problems will ensure that every important factor is weighed, every pitfall foreseen (see chs. 15:22; 20:18; 24:6).

When counsel is rejected, there is little that can be done for those void of wisdom but to leave them to discover by hard experience that good counsel is a blessing from God that should be accepted (1T 225).

**15. Surety.** See on ch. 6:1.

**16. Strong men.** Heb. *Ôarisim*, “ruthless, terror-striking men.” The import of the passage seems to be that a gracious woman will guard her honor as effectively as a powerful and violent man protects his wealth.

**17. The merciful man.** The kindly, helpful man who unselfishly gives assistance to others is also taking the surest way to help himself. Contrariwise, the mean, cruel man harms himself as well as others. One reason for this is that the indulgence of any tendency or trait of character, whether good or bad, increasingly strengthens it. Another reason is that moods and actions are reflected back from others. A cruel action is likely to arouse cruelty in others, a kindly deed will return in helpful friendship from those so aided (see Matt. 5:7; 7:2, 12).

**18. A deceitful work.** The wicked man thinks that he is going to gain a worth-while return for his evil labors, but finds that his reward is very different (see ch. 1:10–19; see also on v. 17). The righteous man sows righteousness and reaps a harvest that is as sure as eternity (Gal. 6:8).

**19. Tendeth to life.** This verse states a simple and well-known truth. Since Christ draws unto Himself all men, and the Father deals out to every man a measure of faith, a man must choose either to respond to that drawing power or to resist it and be lost. Eternal life is as sure a reward for righteousness as eternal death is for sin (John 12:32; Rom. 6:23; SC 31).

**20. A froward heart.** God has a particular abhorrence of the deceitful, underhanded sinner who covers his perverse heart with a show of godliness (see chs. 3:32; 12:20; 17:20; 4T 326; 5T 536). With joy the Lord turns from the contemplation of hypocrites to the glad spectacle of the truehearted followers of Jesus.

**21. Though hand join in hand.** Literally, “hand to hand.” This phrase has been variously interpreted. The LXX renders it, “he that unjustly strikes hands.” The striking or grasping of hands may refer to the means by which men attested truth. We may see here also a suggestion of the great confederacy of evil by which Satan has sought to win this world for his own domain, and also of the confederacies of wicked men who defy God, persecute His people, and claim finally to have made a covenant with death so as to escape punishment (see Isa. 8:12; 28:15, 18; GC 560, 561).

Throughout the history of the great controversy, evil men have banded together to oppress the people of God only to find that the Defender of the righteous is mightier than the great deceiver with whom they have made an agreement (see 2 Chron. 20:1–25; Neh. 4:7–15).

**22. Without discretion.** A woman without discretion is evidently one who has abandoned womanly modesty and adopted a dissolute manner of speech and action; for the contrast is between beauty of form and figure and an ugly, swinish character. To adorn a pig with a golden nose ring is ridiculous. To fail to maintain a noble character within a beautiful body is tragic, both for the woman and for those who meet her.

**23. Wrath.** Heb. *Ôebrah*, “overflowing rage,” “fury.” While the desires of the righteous man tend only to that which is good, and God decrees that all things work together for his good (Rom. 8:28), the evil man desires those things that naturally and inevitably bring upon him the anger of men and, finally, the anger of God. Both in this life and in the day of God’s wrath, the selfish reap trouble (see Rev. 14:10; 16:19; GC 36, 37).

**24. Scattereth.** Not every kind of scattering brings an increase. Careless giving often does harm both to the giver and to the receiver; but the loving, thoughtful endeavor to use one’s means to alleviate the sufferings and aid the struggles of those in need, brings wealth to both. The more the giver’s means are used to help others, the more he receives. The same is true of contributions made for the work of God (see v. 25). Withholding more than is right tends to poverty, both spiritual and material.

**25. The liberal soul.** Literally, “the soul of blessing.” He who blesses others blesses himself (see 2 Cor. 9:6–15).

**26. Withholdeth corn.** In time of scarcity there are those who hold back supplies until the price rises sufficiently to give them an excessive profit at the expense of their fellows. Naturally such men are hated and cursed by those who suffer want because of such activities (see Amos 8:4–7). Naturally, also, those who break artificially raised prices by selling at normal prices are loved and blessed. Joseph’s work in Egypt was done on behalf of the people as well as the king. Hoarders of Joseph’s type would be welcome in any time of scarcity (Gen. 41:53–57).

**27. Diligently seeketh good.** Those who busy themselves in service for their fellows receive honor and favor as their reward. While their search for good is unselfish, the reward is sure.

**28. Shall fall.** It was an amazement to the disciples when Christ said that it was hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom (Mark 10:24–26). The Hebrews regarded riches as a sure sign of the blessing of God, a mark of firm establishment in the world. But riches often become a snare. Instead of feeling his need of the Holy Spirit, instead of sharing his prosperity with others, the rich man often feels that he must protect his position by continually adding to his property and resources (see 1 Tim. 6:17). Even though he goes to his grave with the honor of men, leaving behind him great wealth, to the Lord he is a poor shriveled leaf that has fallen down to the ground.

**Branch.** Literally, “leaf.” The righteous are compared to green leaves, but the wicked are likened to falling autumn leaves.

**29. His own house.** A man may cause trouble indirectly by inefficient management of his affairs or by his indolence. In that event both he and his household will have little more than wind to live upon. Or he may cause trouble directly by his harsh insistence upon economy, his anxiety and fretfulness lest his precious money be wasted. Such an attitude fails to win the cooperation of the family and the servants. In either case there is no profit, nothing but wind as gain. Such a fool in Solomon’s day would be likely to lose his patrimony and be forced to work as the servant of the wise man who won the love and assistance of his household by his kindness and

generosity. Compare the experience of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32).

**30. A tree of life.** The fruitage of the righteous man consists in wise and helpful words and actions, and these become to others a tree of life that feeds body and soul. Also the example of a good man promotes spiritual health and leads to eternal life.

**He that winneth.** Heb. *loqeach*, a form of the verb *laqach*, “to take.” Only here is *laqach* translated “win.” It is used more than 700 times in the sense of “to take” or “to take away.” Since the object of the verb here is “souls,” Heb. *nephashoth* (plural of *nephesh*), and since *nephesh* frequently means “life” (Gen. 9:4; Ex. 4:19; etc.), some translate the phrase “he who taketh away lives.” The same combination of Hebrew words is thus translated in 1 Kings 19:4; Ps. 31:13; Prov. 1:19. If such is the intended meaning of the phrase, how can the “takers away of lives” be considered wise? This is the basic problem of the text, and this problem most obviously led the translators of the KJV to employ the unusual rendering, “win,” for *laqach*. Others follow the LXX, which renders the verse, “Out of the fruit of righteousness grows a tree of life; but the souls of transgressors are cut off before their time.”

**31. Behold.** Or, “if.” The LXX renders this verse, “If the righteous scarcely shall be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?” This reading is quoted in 1 Peter 4:18. The LXX was in common use in the first century A.D., and was the OT of the Greek-speaking Christians. When the Greek differs from the Hebrew it is impossible to determine whether the difference is due to the translation’s being from a different Hebrew text or being a paraphrase of the text, or to changes resulting from transmission.

The outworking of God’s program will see the righteous ultimately recompensed in the earth (Dan. 7:27; Matt. 5:5; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1, 2). Likewise the wicked will receive their punishment on this earth (Rev. 20; GC 673).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 4T 310
- 2 CH 371
- 4 3T 549
- 5 GC 286
- 13 2T 185; 4T 195
- 14 1T 225; 2T 357; 5T 30, 293; WM 202, 231
- 15 AH 391; Ed 136; 1T 200
- 24 AA 345; Ed 139; PP 528; 2T 160, 331; 6T 449
- 24, 25 CS 36, 49; ML 333; 1T 222; 6T 307; 9T 253
- 25 ChS 144; DA 142; Ed 140; MB 41; 1T 645; 2T 661; 3T 382; 6T 51, 307; 7T 170; WM 308
- 30 FE 199; 3T 422; GC 673

## CHAPTER 12

**1. Loveth knowledge.** Some people would be happy to acquire knowledge if it did not necessitate the receiving of instruction, correction, and reproof (see 2 Tim. 3:16). To lack regret for past failure, to have no willingness to reform, and to cherish no high aspirations for the future is to be like the beasts of the field, which cannot develop character and have no soul to save (see 2 Peter 2:12).

**2. A good man.** The meaning here is to be found by a comparison with the type of wickedness described in the second part of the verse. The favor of the Lord is gained by men who

are straightforward and honest in their dealings.

**3. Root of the righteous.** Compare Ps. 1:3, 4; 37:23, 31; Eph. 3:17.

**4. A crown.** In Solomon's day, parents guided their children in the selection of mates. Today, young people insist upon making their own choice. The facts here stated should be thoughtfully and prayerfully contemplated early enough to save from thoughtless choosing and lifelong regret. A weak, gossiping, immodest, or wasteful woman saps the initiative and determination of her husband.

**5. Are right.** Literally, "are judgments," or "justice." The righteous are good through and through, and their inner motives inspire them to do good to others. Their conscience within them acts as a judge and passes upon all the thoughts and impulses that spring into consciousness. The conscience is more and more controlled by the promptings of the Holy Spirit as the individual moves nearer to the goal of Christlikeness (see Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27). In contrast with the inner goodness that motivates the upright, the wicked are a source of unsound counsels that deceive and injure those who heed them. The good way is the only way of happiness and true success (see Prov. 14:12; John 14:6).

**6. Words of the wicked.** Verse 5 contrasted the thoughts of the righteous with the counsels of the wicked. This verse deals with the expressed thoughts of each. The words of the wicked cause sorrow and death by their deceptiveness. Their false accusations and slanders stir up enmity. The upright use their eloquence and wisdom to enlighten, to defend, and to win friends for the innocent, whose blood the wicked seek (see 1 Kings 21:1–24; 2 Kings 4:1–7).

**7. Shall stand.** The righteous man builds his house upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and his expectations are sure (Matt. 7:24–27). Possessing the Saviour, he has eternal life (1 John 5:11, 12; see DA 388). He may fall; yea, he may fall seven times over, but he rises up again (Prov. 24:16).

**8. According to his wisdom.** There is nothing that brings more lasting commendation than wisdom and discretion. Men who can always be depended upon, men whose actions are governed by intelligence and high principles (see 1 Sam. 18:5), are always in demand. The vain and senseless man, the man who takes a distorted view of life and people, the man who twists and turns, is despised by all who see him as he is, even by those who use him for their own ends. Judas was such a one (Matt. 27:3–8; Acts 1:16–20).

**9. Hath a servant.** The LXX renders this phrase, "serving himself," hence the translation of the RSV, "Better is a man of humble standing who works for himself than one who plays the great man but lacks bread." The meaning of the KJV rendering is that a man who has a servant to work for him and to grow wheat for bread, even though lightly esteemed, is better than the boastful man who is hungry.

The Hebrew word *qalah*, here translated "despised," means "to be lightly esteemed," "to be dishonored," and is different from the word thus translated in v. 8. "Despised" in v. 8 comes from *buz*, which properly means "to despise," "to show despite toward."

**10. Are cruel.** God has a tender regard for the animals He has made. Their undeserved sufferings do not go unnoticed (Jonah 4:11; Matt. 6:26; 10:29). The instructions of the law included regulations regarding the treatment of the lower animals (Ex. 23:4, 5; Deut. 25:4; PP 443; DA 500). The adversary of men has done much to aggravate the sufferings of man and beast. Those who take him as master become cruel, and their selfishness blinds them to the real needs of others.

**11. Vain persons.** Heb. *reqim*. The word means simply, "vanities," or "vain things." "Persons" is a supplied word. A desire to better one's condition is a good quality, but to neglect



present tasks to follow a dream, is folly. To do with might what the hand finds to do supplies daily food and leaves one time to pursue other worth-while aims and to prepare for higher service (see Ed 267).

**12. The net.** Heb. *mas\od*. There is some doubt as to the exact meaning of this word as well as of the sentence in which it occurs. *Mas\od* is thought at times to mean siege-works. The meaning of the verse may be that the wicked wants booty (or protection) but gets no real gain, while the good man is well rooted and fruitful.

**13. Out of trouble.** The wicked man gets himself entangled in the lies that he tells, and there is no one to get him out. The righteous man gets into difficulties through the attacks of his enemies, but his honesty and the overruling power of God bring him out of his troubles (see Ps. 37:39, 40; 2 Peter 2:9).

**14. Fruit of his mouth.** The righteous is rewarded for both his good speech and the work of his hands.

**The recompence.** The second clause of the verse may be rendered literally, “The reward of a man’s hands, *he* will return unto him.” It is God who causes these rewards so to return to bless the good man (see Job 1:10; Isa. 3:10).

**15. Hearkeneth unto counsel.** See chs. 3:7; 13:10; 14:12; 16:2; 21:2; 1T 360.

**16. Presently.** Literally, “in the day,” meaning “instantly.” In 1611 “presently” had this meaning. The foolish man has failed to train himself in self-control. If he is vexed by insult or fancied slight, he gives immediate expression to his hurt feelings. The wise man realizes that such action will probably aggravate the trouble, so he waits until tempers have cooled before he seeks to right the wrong; or he may ignore it completely (see Prov. 20:22; 24:29; Matt. 5:39; Luke 6:35).

**17. Speaketh truth.** Literally, “breatheth out truth.” Perhaps a reference to the confirmed habit of speaking truth, that is, a man speaks truth as naturally as he breathes. The one with such a trait of character is governed by the dictates of right (MB 104, 105). It is for this reason that Christians need have no hesitation in taking the judicial oath (see MB 104, 105; DA 706, 707). On the contrary, the habitual prevaricator does not tell the truth even when he swears to do so. His habit of suppressing part of the truth, or coloring it until it gives an impression that is really a lie, will soon show the observant listener that no credence can be placed in his word (see ch. 14:5, 25).

**18. Piercings of a sword.** The simile is particularly striking in Hebrew, since the edge of a sword is called its mouth. The hasty, impatient mouth speaks words that wound the hearts of friends and lead to great suffering and sorrow. Tactless words often prick the tender hearts of those who mourn or are in difficulty, but the wise man knows what to say to comfort the sorrowing, soothe the angry, and cheer the despondent (see ch. 10:11; Ed 236, 237).

**19. For a moment.** The Hebrew probably means, “while I wink the eye.” The reign of evil is but for a moment. The truth of God cannot be overthrown. Even human truth can stand every sort of investigation without fear. But lies are soon found out and exposed, if not in this life, in the judgment to come. Even the great deception of Satan will be finally and utterly laid bare before the universe at the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:1–10; GC 666–670).

**20. Imagine.** Heb. *charash*, meaning “to devise.”

**21. No evil.** Probably in the sense that the harm that comes to the just man is turned into a blessing by the intervention of God (see Rom. 8:28).

**Mischief.** Heb. *raô*, most frequently translated “evil.” It may refer to moral evil, as in 1 Kings 11:6, or calamity, as in Ps. 141:5. In this verse calamity is evidently meant.

**22. Lying lips.** Compare Prov. 10:31, 32; 12:19; 13:5; 16:13; 17:7; James 3:5, 6; Rev. 22:15; PP 506. See on Prov. 6:17; 12:17.

**23. Concealeth knowledge.** The prudent man does not hold his peace with intent to deceive, but from modesty and wise caution. It is a lack of wisdom and modesty that makes the fool utter whatever may chance to come into his mind (see chs. 12:16; 13:16; 15:2).

**24. The slothful.** Laziness brings poverty and discomfort instead of promised pleasure. Diligent men, who use their time wisely, are sure to rise above those who are indolent.

**25. Heaviness.** Literally, “care,” “anxiety.” An anxious heart cannot be filled with the promised peace of Christ, and anxiety is a denial of the faithfulness of God (see Ps. 37:1–11; Matt. 6:34; 1 Peter 5:7; PP 294). Heaviness can be greatly lightened by a word of hope and encouragement, and an exhortation to faith in the promises of God (see Isa. 35:3, 4).

**26. More excellent.** There is some doubt as to the meaning of the Hebrew in this verse. The first clause may also be translated, “the righteous searches out his friend,” or “the righteous spies out his pasture.” The meaning of the second clause is evident. The way of the wicked man is dark and deceitful, so that he himself is being led toward destruction and is unable to guide anyone else aright (see Matt. 15:14).

**27. The slothful man.** Whether the lazy man fails to take the beast he is hunting or whether he is too slothful to cook it when caught, is not clear. Nor is it certain whether the second clause means that diligence, or the result of diligence, or even the diligent person himself, is a treasure. The verse will bear all these meanings, and all are true.

**28. Way of righteousness.** To choose the way of holiness is to choose life as much today as when Solomon uttered these words, or when Israel faced the choice at Gerizim and Ebal (see Deut. 27; 28; 30:15–20; Matt. 19:17).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 2 ML 54
- 4 5T 123
- 10 PP 442
- 17 ML 331; 4T 335
- 18 Ed 237
- 22 AA 76; ML 331; PP 506
- 28 ML 5

## CHAPTER 13

**1. A wise son.** Solomon had seen the teachings of this verse clearly and tragically demonstrated in his father’s household. Several of his brothers scorned the rebuke of David and went on in their evil way until overtaken by the consequences (2 Sam. 13–19; 1 Kings 1; 1 Kings 2), but Solomon listened and learned, and became the wisest man who ever lived.

**3. Keepeth his life.** Solomon repeats many times the importance of keeping a guard upon the lips (see ch. 12:13, 14, 22, 23; etc.). Although such counsel has been repeatedly proclaimed and clearly demonstrated throughout human history, there are still only a few who succeed in keeping a constant watch upon their lips. Much misery could be avoided if men would heed this wise admonition, but it seems that men must learn the truth of it by bitter experience. Unfortunately many never seem to learn to it.

**4. Soul.** Here used of the individual himself. Thus the “soul” is spoken of as being fat or

lean. Striving after material or intellectual riches to the almost complete exclusion of spiritual food, leaves areas of leanness in the soul (see Ps. 106:13–15; Matt. 6:2; Luke 10:38–42).

**5. *Hateth lying.*** Lying breaks down confidence and destroys friendship; yet many people will use a falsehood when they deem it necessary to get themselves out of some difficulty or to escape more serious trouble. Man works up a bulwark against this evil only by developing a strong loathing for sin of every kind. Such loathing is developed by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart. The man who indulges in lying identifies himself with sin, and thus himself becomes loathsome and a thing of shame (see Ps. 101:7, 8; John 8:44; Rev. 21:27).

**6. *Wickedness.*** See on chs. 1:31; 5:22; 11:3.

**7. *Maketh himself rich.*** Some think this clause should be given the meaning, “maketh himself *out to be* rich,” and likewise the second clause, “maketh himself out to be poor.” This interpretation makes both men hypocrites—one pretending to be rich when he is poor, the other to be poor when he is rich. However, there seems to be no real antithesis and no lesson in such a reading. The translation, as it stands, is equally allowable and suggests a teaching similar to that of our Saviour concerning those who gain the world yet lose their souls, and the wiser ones who use their means to build up an eternal treasure in heaven (see Mark 8:36; Luke 12:15–21, 33).

**8. *The ransom.*** The first clause may be understood as stating that the rich man is able to use his wealth to buy himself out of trouble, especially the kind of trouble caused by false charges made by oppressive rulers in the hope of gain. By contrast, the poor man does not get into these difficulties, nor does he hear these false accusations, because he is so poor that no money can be made by troubling him.

Another interpretation of the verse is that, while riches are so valuable in getting a man out of various kinds of difficulties, the poor man refuses to heed the advice and counsel that would aid him in earning for himself such riches.

**9. *Rejoiceth.*** There may be an intended contrast here between the “light” and the “lamp.” The good man glows with divine light from the Source of all light and life, while the bad man is forced to devise a lamp by whose glimmering and smoky light he hopes to see a way through to a good end in spite of his rejection of the true Light. The light is eternal, but the lamps will all die out (see Job 18:5; John 1:8).

**10. *Pride.*** Heb. *zadon*, “insolence,” “presumptuousness.” The contrast here is between the one who is too proud to take advice and who feel insulted if anyone suggests that he needs it, and the wise man who listens to the advice of men of experience. Not only does the proud man quarrel with those who would instruct him, but he gets into other disputes of various kinds as a result of following his own ill-advised ways (see chs. 11:2; 12:15).

**11. *By vanity.*** Wealth gained without real effort is soon dissipated. What a man has toiled to earn he will usually spend with care, and, gradually, he will build up a reserve (see chs. 20:21; 21:5).

**12. *Hope deferred.*** There is a vivid contrast implied here. The sick heart has lost hope. The springs of energy and ambition have been sapped, leaving the man truly forlorn. But when a good hope is realized, life is renewed, strength and happiness are multiplied, as by the fruit of the tree of life (see ch. 11:30).

It may be that to some the long delay in the coming of the Lord has seemed like a deferred hope. But one who is ready for that coming and prays that it may be ushered in speedily has so close a walk with God that he is constantly experiencing the fulfillment of desires and the renewing of his confidence (see Gen. 5:22).

**13. *The word.*** The parallelism of the verse suggests that “word” here stands for “commandment” (see Deut. 30:14–16).

**14. Law.** Heb. *torah*, signifying “instruction” (see on ch. 3:1). The instruction of the wise guides those who heed it over the uneven pathway of life, preventing them from falling into the pitfalls of sin and death that beset the path of life on every hand.

**15. Hard.** Heb. *Ōethan*, literally, “durable,” “lasting,” perhaps here in the sense of “firm,” “hard,” “rugged.” While a child of God travels the path of life with very little friction, the sinner finds the going hard, because his own obduracy is reflected back from those he meets (Matt. 7:2). The LXX renders the second clause, “but the ways of scorers tend to destruction.”

**16. Dealeth with knowledge.** That is, “act understandingly.” The fool flaunts his foolishness in public, either because he does not realize that it is folly, or because he does not care (see ch. 15:2).

**17. Mischief.** For the meaning of “mischief” see on ch. 12:21. Some take the verb as transitive and causative—“plunges men into trouble” (RSV). This rendering requires a change in the Masoretic vowels.

**18. Honoured.** Solomon returns to the often-repeated assertion that the only way to success is to listen to the instruction of the wise (see chs. 1–5).

**19. Abomination.** The true desire of the soul is for salvation from sinfulness and its dreadful consequences; yet the fool, because he is a fool, hates to leave his evil ways even at the cost of eternal life.

**20. Shall be destroyed.** Literally, “shall be made [or become] evil.” A man may be known by the company he keeps. A “companion of fools” becomes more and more like his associates. The choice of companions has an important bearing on the development of the young. An old proverb says, “He that lives with a cripple learns to limp.” The man who becomes like his evil companions, must also be willing to share their fate (see 4T 589).

**21. Shall be repayed.** Or, “He [God] will repay good.” While the evil man is permitted to reap results of his selfish choices, the good man is given an equally sure reward (see Ps. 11:5–7; Eccl. 2:26; Rev. 2:23; Rev. 22:12).

**22. Inheritance.** The good man considers others and builds up a good inheritance to pass on to his children, but the sinner spends on himself that which he should preserve. The evil man may defraud the righteous of his wealth and property; but it returns, sooner or later, to the family of the good man (see Ex. 12:35, 36; Job 27:16, 17; Prov. 28:8).

**23. Tillage.** Or, “fallow ground,” as in Jer. 4:3 and Hosea 10:12.

**Is destroyed.** The poor fritter away, through a lack of judgment, their hard-won gains (see MH 195).

**24. His rod.** Compare chs. 19:18; 22:15; 23:13, 14; 29:15, 17. The rod may be considered a symbol of disciplinary action of many kinds. Suitable corporal punishment may be particularly helpful when a child is very young. Later on, it tends to produce undesirable reactions, and other forms of punishment are preferable.

**Hateth.** The term must be understood relatively in the sense of loving someone else or something else more. Compare this use of “hate” in Luke 14:26. He who neglects to discipline his children because he is indolent, or because he has a distaste for the task, puts self before his children, and so may be said to “hate” them.

**Betimes.** This is a translation of a Hebrew idiom that refers to diligence in terms of early rising. Some have interpreted the idiom to mean that a child should be disciplined early in his life. Doubtless he should be, but the idea can hardly be derived from the Hebrew.

**25. The satisfying.** The wants of the good man are moderate, and he has the promise of God that these simple wants will be satisfied (see Isa. 33:16). The desires of the sinful man are

often intemperate. However much he gets, he wants more. For him there are no promises of the miraculous supply of his needs. His master is a cruel one. It is only by the goodness of God that springtime and harvest, sunshine and rain, give him a share of the bounties of the earth (see Gen. 8:22; Prov. 10:3; Matt. 5:45).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

4 AH 391; Ed 135  
11 AH 391; Ed 136  
15 MB 201  
20 Ed 136; FE 294; 4T 589  
23 MH 195

## CHAPTER 14

**1. Woman.** No house can be strong unless it be controlled by a wise and diligent woman. When the woman of the house is foolish, not only will she neglect to order the house aright, but her foolish behavior will raise up enemies without and stir up strife within (see chs. 24:3; 31:10–31).

**2. Feareth the Lord.** That is, gives reverence to Him. The fear of the good man is vastly different from the dismay and terror that seize the sinner in those moments when he sees clearly the direction he is going and the fate that awaits him.

**Despiseth him.** How strange, yet true, that puny man, a mere particle of dust in the scale of the universe, should dare to look down upon the Creator and Upholder of the mighty spheres and their circling planets, or to take His holy name in vain.

**3. Lips.** The words of the wise man are humble and conciliatory, win friends, and protect from harm (see chs. 13:3; 15:1).

**4. Is clean.** That is, “empty.” A full crib and a full granary demand hard work on the part of the farmer and require the strength of the oxen for plowing and threshing the grain. One who does not care for his soil cannot expect a rich return (see chs. 12:11; 28:19).

The word here translated “clean,” *bar*, though it may refer to “moral purity” (Ps. 19:8; 24:4), does not seem to denote “cleanness” in the sense of “emptiness.” *Bar* may also be translated “grain” (“corn,” KJV, Gen. 41:35; etc.). A slight change in the preceding word permits the translation “where there are no oxen there is no grain.”

**5. Will utter lies.** Literally, “breatheth forth lies.” The righteous man naturally breathes out truth (see on ch. 12:17), and the false witness, lies. The faithful witness cannot and will not lie (see ch. 13:5).

**6. Knowledge is easy.** The difference between the one who fails to find knowledge and the one who gains wisdom is in the manner of seeking. The scorner is unprepared to accept instruction, and consequently when he seeks wisdom “it is not” (literal rendering). The man of understanding humbles himself to listen to his instructors. He does not blindly accept everything he is told, but he listens to, then proves, all things. As a result he finds much acceptable knowledge (Ps. 25:9; 1 Thess. 5:21).

**7. Go from.** This verse reinforces the lesson of ch. 13:20. There is nothing to gain and much to lose by associating with foolish and impenitent companions.

**8. Is deceit.** The fool deceives others and thinks that he will gain thereby, because he has not troubled himself to consider and evaluate the outcome of his actions. The prudent man shows

his wisdom by subjecting every plan and every act to careful scrutiny. He must be satisfied that the course he is pursuing leads to eternal life. He knows that there are forces at work within him and without that are seeking to lead him astray (see Jer. 17:9; Eph. 5:15).

**9. Make a mock.** Heb. *yalis*, a singular verb demanding a singular subject. Hence it is more correct to translate the clause, “guilt mocks at fools.” Whether fools mock at sin or not, it is certain that sin mocks at them, for they do not realize how powerful is the hold that wrongdoing has upon them (see ch. 5:22; Ed 291).

**10. Bitterness.** The first clause reads literally, “the heart knows the bitterness of its soul.” Though friends and loved ones learn to understand something of our joys and sorrows, they can never get within our hearts and experience all that we are feeling of bitterness and sorrow. They are likewise strangers to our joy. However, Jesus knows our deepest sorrows and shares our highest joys (see DA 327).

**11. Tabernacle.** Heb. *Óohel*, “tent.” There may be an intended contrast in this verse between the “house” and the “tent.” The wicked man makes all his plans for this life. He seeks to establish himself in a settled and comfortable dwelling. But the righteous man remembers that he is a stranger and a pilgrim, tenting toward the city of God (see Heb. 11:9, 10). Sooner or later the house of the wicked falls, leaving its once proud owner trembling and shelterless before a righteous Judge. The upright man finds his tent a haven of peace and happiness until his course is run. He awaits the coming of the eternal kingdom, in which he will have a glorious and everlasting mansion (see Prov. 3:33; 12:7; Matt. 7:24–27).

**12. Of death.** The ways of death here spoken of are not entered into blindly or thoughtlessly. They are chosen with the assurance that they at least seem to be proper under the circumstances. The warning is against trusting to the guidance of the conscience without checking the conscience constantly against the teaching of the Word of God. Many men have persuaded themselves that God will accept a substitute for His precise requirements, only to find that they have lost all. The Roman governor Pilate presents an outstanding example. While he was probably not familiar with the written word, the living Word Himself instructed him by voice and example. The governor thought that he could compromise with evil and still retain his wealth and position, but his compromise led to disgrace and death (Matt. 27:11–26; DA 738).

**13. Even in laughter.** A reminder of the fact that many a sad heart seeks to hide its trouble under a cloak of careless laughter, and that the wrong kind of mirth can end only in grief (see Eccl. 7:4).

**14. The backslider.** The backslider has known better things. For him the way of selfish gratifications quickly brings satiation and an inner dissatisfaction, even though that dissatisfaction may not lead to repentance.

**From himself.** As the backslider is filled with the fruits of his evil ways, so the good man is filled with the fruits of his good ways (see Isa. 3:10). The LXX renders this verse, “A stouthearted man shall be filled with his own ways; and a good man with his own thoughts.”

**15. The simple.** Heb. *pethi*, meaning “simple,” probably in the sense of being open-minded, open to instruction. In a bad sense *pethi* refers to those easily misled.

**16. Feareth.** The wise man knows that every pathway is beset with the snares of the adversary, and he cautiously examines every action and every new idea by the light of the Word of God. In this setting it would seem that the raging of the fool is a haughty and self-confident bearing that leaves him a prey to Satan and makes it easy for the adversary to lead him into a trap from which there is little likelihood of escape (see chs. 22:3; 28:26).

**17. Wicked devices.** Heb. *mezimmoth*, a word that may be understood in a good sense of

“discretion” (chs. 1:4; 2:11; 3:21; 5:2), or in a bad sense of “wicked devices,” as in ch. 12:2 and probably here. If “wicked devices” are understood, then the verse lacks the usual antithetic parallelism. The LXX preserves this parallelism by rendering the verse, “A passionate man acts unconsiderately; but a sensible man bears up under many things.”

**18. Simple.** See on v. 15. The simple refuse to learn, and thus by deliberate choice make themselves heirs to the father of all folly. The prudent man seeks for wisdom and receives knowledge as a crown of honor and of victory.

**19. At the gates.** This verse is not invariably fulfilled in this life; though, even here, the wicked sometimes find the tables reversed so that they are forced to bow before the righteous. As the allegorical rich man was ready to bow before Abraham and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), so all the wicked will one day bow outside the New Jerusalem and acknowledge the justice of their exclusion from heaven (see Rev. 20:9, 12; GC 666–669).

**20. Hated.** Too often the poor man is worthy of honor and the rich man mean and overbearing, and yet the one is neglected and the other lauded by his fellows (see James 2:1–6; cf. Prov. 18:5; 24:23; 28:21).

**22. Do they not err?** The purpose of the question is to make a strong assertion. Even if there were no God and no eternal reward, it would still pay to “devise good” and thus encounter kindness and trustworthiness in those around. Mercy occurs in combination with truth (Ps. 61:7; 85:10; Prov. 3:3; 16:6).

**24. Riches.** Apparently more than material riches are meant here, for the wise are often comparatively poor. However, the wise do handle the means they have in a way that brings honor to their name, and they possess spiritual and intellectual riches as well.

**Foolishness.** Heb. *Ōiwweleth*. This same word is translated “folly” later in this verse. *Ōiwweleth* comes from the root *Ōul*, which means (1) “to be foolish,” (2) “to be strong,” “to be elevated.” It has been suggested that Solomon was using a play on words, as was common in ancient times, and that the first occurrence of *Ōiwweleth* is derived from meaning (1) and the second occurrence from meaning (2). Such a derivation could yield the following meaning of the proverb: “While the use made by the wise of their wealth is an ornament to them, the elevation of fools, so far from honoring them, serves only to reveal their foolishness.” However, the interpretation is conjectural. Though the two meanings of the root can be demonstrated, no derivation of the root spelled as in the text, and meaning “elevation,” can be found.

**25. A true witness.** When lives are at stake through false accusation, the brave witness of an honest man may save them. When the evidence of liars is accepted without close investigation, the whole system of justice is rendered unreliable.

**27. The fear of the Lord.** Compare chs. 8:13; 19:23.

**28. Multitude of people.** Not in war and conquest is the king’s honor, but in the multitude of his subjects living in peace and security.

**29. Slow to wrath.** The order of words suggests that great understanding follows self-control, and that is true; but it is also true that the greater the understanding, the greater the self-control. It has been said that to understand all would be to forgive all. Much of a man’s nature is due to his inheritance and his environment. When we understand the factors that have brought about another’s untrustworthiness or his quick temper, our exasperation is lessened. This is not to say that a man’s character is determined by his environment, and that thus there is an excuse for his sin. But inheritance and surroundings often present great handicaps to successful character development.

The man who is quick-tempered exhibits folly where all can see it. He reveals his own lack of

understanding and of self-control, and these are some of the chief marks of a fool. The wisest man takes leave of his wisdom when he loses his temper, and for the time he becomes a fool. His habits of wise action may prevent his outburst from being as foolish as that of a less wise man, but in the heat of the moment he stands in danger of abandoning conscious control of his words or actions (see Num. 20:7–13; PP 417–421).

**30. The life.** A sound heart makes for a sound body. Many real sicknesses and deformities have been found to be due to the harboring of jealousy, guilt, and anger, and cures have been wrought by restoring tranquillity and trust to the soul (see MH 241–258).

**31. Mercy on the poor.** The neglect of and contempt for the poor has been the common attitude wherever and whenever the revelation of God in the Holy Scriptures has been absent. This attitude is in marked contrast with the insistence of the Bible that the poor are a trust that God has confided to His more fortunate people (see John 12:8). Israel had a system of land ownership designed to preserve for every family their piece of land, and many regulations to ease the lot of the unfortunate (see Lev. 25:10, 23–28; Deut. 15:7–11; MH 184, 185). Because God has permitted poverty to exist, partly as a demonstration of the results of sin and of indolence, and partly as a test of the generosity of His people, those who do not aid the poor are dishonoring and disobeying the Father of all (see Mark 10:21; 14:7; Gal. 2:10).

**32. Driven away.** The Hebrew for this clause may better be rendered, “cast down in his calamity.” The contrast, then, is between the sinner who faces calamity without the assurance of protection from God, because he has failed to serve Him faithfully in times of peace and prosperity, and the good man who can face certain death with the calm trust that has carried him through life.

**33. Resteth.** The verse may be paraphrased thus: “Wisdom abides quietly in the inner part of the wise man, but fools loudly advertise what little wisdom is within them.” The LXX avoids the difficulty of assigning wisdom to the fool by rendering the second clause, “but in the heart of fools it [wisdom] is not discerned.”

**34. Exalteth a nation.** Righteousness here implies rightdoing in every relationship. In the case of individuals, the results of rightdoing or wrongdoing are not always immediately apparent. Some good men have spent their lives in want and woe, while wicked men have seemed to enjoy the pleasures of sin. The psalmist observed this seeming reversal of the divine rule, and only by looking to the future rewards was he reassured as to the dealings of God with man (Ps. 73). But in the case of nations this statement appears to be more generally worked out, even though the working may be slow. Nations are given a period of probation to see whether they will fulfill the divine purpose or not. When they reject God’s principles they invite ruin (see PK 502, 535).

**35. King’s favour.** Although God permits His children to come into difficulties in order that they may learn lessons that will prepare them for eternal life, and while some evildoers manage to escape the consequences of their acts for a time, this proverb is still true in its general application. These statements or any statement of a general truth must not be reversed and used to condemn particular men or nations of sin because they are in trouble or to prove that a man who enjoys the blessings of a righteous man is necessarily righteous (see DA 470, 471).

**A wise servant.** Again and again the truth stated in v. 35 found its way into the parables and other teachings of Jesus. This contrast is particularly emphasized in the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11–27) and in that of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30). He who pretends to serve and yet acts without discretion earns censure and contempt.



9 Ed 291  
12 DA 738; PK 57; PP 55, 361, 634, 720  
23 AH 391; Ed 135  
26 MH 250  
29 2T 164, 426  
32 PK 264  
34 Ed 47, 175; GC 277; MM 113; PK 502

## CHAPTER 15

**1. A soft answer.** This statement is so true that even when the procedure is used by skillful deceivers, the soft answer enables them to control their victims and lead them on into greater loss. The natural man or woman tends to answer anger with anger, so that the difficulty is made greater and the wounds long lasting. Only when a genuine love for others fills the soul can the right sort of soft answer be made. Even then, love will often guide one to keep silent until the fury of wrath is spent. But the silence should be a loving, sympathetic silence, not one of tight-closed lips and hard eyes (see 1 Sam. 25:14–35; Matt. 5:39; 1 Peter 3:9; MH 486; Ed 114).

**2. Useeth knowledge aright.** The last 150 years have seen a tremendous increase in knowledge, and the rate of acquisition of facts seems to have increased constantly throughout that time. Yet with all the knowledge men have gained, they are not thereby *wiser* than their ancestors. Having rejected the fear of the Lord, they have not even the beginning of true wisdom (ch. 9:10) and are driven by their added knowledge toward a dreadful future (see Ed 225; GC 522).

**3. Beholding.** Better, “keeping watch.” Sometimes children are given the impression that God watches them in order to find cause for blame; but our heavenly Father watches with the pitiful, loving eye of One who knows the frailty of our nature (see Heb. 4:13; Ps. 33:13; 90:8; 103:13, 14).

**4. Wholesome tongue.** Literally, “the healing tongue.” The sort of healing a wholesome tongue can do is shown by the contrasting statement, “breaks the spirit.” The wounds made by a perverse tongue lodge in the heart and mind. Barbed words often rankle for years, and sap physical and mental energy and upset the spiritual life. Because the healing tongue soothes these wounds and stops the losses, it is well described as a tree of life (see James 3:1–10; MH 492; 4T 256; GW 120).

**5. Regardeth reproof.** Compare chs. 6:23; 19:25.

**6. Revenues.** Or, “income,” here almost equivalent to “possessions.” The good man gains and stores up his treasures, while the bad man finds that his income brings more trouble than blessing.

**8. Abomination.** The contrast here is between the sacrifice of the sinner, who hopes to buy favor and be able to continue in his sin without penalty, and the simple prayer of the righteous man, who brings to the Lord the sacrifice of a surrendered heart. The pardon of God is not for sale at any price; it is always a free gift available to all who forsake their sin (see 1 Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11; Jer. 6:20).

**9. The way of the wicked.** The Lord hates the *way* of the wicked, but loves the righteous *man*. The good man not only follows righteousness, but he pursues it ardently, as is indicated by the intensive form of the verb here translated “followeth after” (see 1 Tim. 6:11).

**10. Correction is grievous.** Better, “There *is* a grievous chastisement for him that forsaketh the way.”

**Shall die.** The wicked may come to a sudden and disastrous end. He faces also the far more

grievous punishment of the second death at the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:5–15).

**11. Hell.** Heb. *she'Ol*. The derivation of this word is uncertain. Some think it may come from a root meaning “to ask,” others, from a word which means “to be hollow,” still others refrain from positive statement as to its etymology. In the KJV *she'Ol* is translated “grave” 31 times, “hell” 31 times, and “pit” 6 times. An examination of the various verses in which *she'Ol* appears shows that *she'Ol* was used as a figurative expression denoting the place where men go at death (Gen. 37:35; 1 Sam. 2:6; Job 7:9; 14:13; Ps. 49:14, 15). From a strictly literal point of view *she'Ol* may be equated with “grave,” but Bible writers employing the figure described *she'Ol* as a place where the dead sleep together (see on 2 Sam. 12:23), though not in a state of consciousness, unless figuratively (see Eze. 32:21). *She'Ol* is described as having bars (Job 17:16), and gates (Isa. 38:10). It is said to be deep, in contrast with heaven, which is high (Deut. 32:22; Job 11:8; Ps. 86:13; 139:8). *She'Ol* is nowhere described as a place of punishment after death. That concept was later attached to *gehenna* (Mark 9:43–48), not to *hades*, the Greek word that properly translates *she'Ol*, with one exception (Luke 16:23).

**Destruction.** Heb. *Öabaddon*, from the root *Öabad*, to “to stray,” “to perish.” On *Öabaddon* as a place of destruction see on Job 26:6.

The meaning of this passage seems clear. God knows the characters and has the record of the acts of those who have perished; how much more can He discern the hearts and minds of living men (see Ps. 33:13–15; 90:8; 139:1–16; Heb. 4:12, 13).

**12. A scorner.** The mocker of good things joins the hardened sinner in rejecting instruction and advice (see Isa. 29:20, 21).

**13. A merry heart.** “Merry” has changed its meaning since 1611. It did not then have the meaning of boisterous mirth. “God rest you merry, gentlemen” meant, “God keep you in glad peace, gentlemen.” The face glows with joy when the heart is full of light and peace. But the spirit is broken by continued sorrow of heart. When anxiety is permitted to reign, resilience is steadily weakened, until at last the resistance of the mind may be broken. The mental trouble is reflected in the physical condition of the body (see ch. 17:22; LS 255–258; COL 167, 168).

**15. The afflicted.** The second clause suggests that it may be mental affliction that makes all the days evil. The pessimist worries so much about the past, which he cannot alter, and the future, which he cannot know, that he does not use wisely the present, which alone is his. This attitude of gloom colors his vision and reacts upon others. The glad, contented heart finds a feast in a little thankfully received, forgets the troubles that are behind, and looks forward with joy and confidence to a future under the loving care of a heavenly Father (Luke 12:22–32).

**16. Better is little.** This verse underlines the truth in v. 15. Few men can be trusted with great wealth because of the strong temptation to set the affections upon riches and to neglect the preparation for the life to come. The boundless riches of a perfect world will be poured out upon all who reach perfection of character (see 1 Tim. 6:6–10, 17–19).

**18. Stirreth up strife.** Not only does the wrathful man upset himself; he tends to disturb all whom he meets (see Prov. 15:1; cf. ch. 14:29; 29:22; Heb. 12:14).

**19. Made plain.** That is, raised up and leveled like a causeway. The inner attitude affects the whole environment. The lazy man sets his mind on avoiding anything in the nature of a difficulty, but the more he thinks of trouble, the more trouble he sees. As the righteous man presses steadily on the heavenly way, difficulties vanish before him because his faith moves the hand of God and he walks step by step along a leveled road, raised high above the world.

**20. Despiseth his mother.** Even when a child grows old enough to realize that his mother

is human and fallible like other people, the close ties that have been created tend to preserve a wholesome respect for the mother. Only one lost to decency can so destroy those early memories that he comes to despise his mother (ch. 10:1 MH 376–378).

**21. Folly is joy.** See on ch. 10:23.

**22. Without counsel.** Compare ch. 11:14.

**23. Hath joy.** When a man makes an apt reply or gives wise counsel, he feels glad that he has been able to do good (see chs. 10:31, 32; 25:11).

**24. Above.** The wise man's way of life leads upward; it may be steep and difficult, but it has its rewards.

**25. Border.** On the sanctity of landmarks see ch. 22:28.

**Of the widow.** The Lord has a special care for the widow and the orphan. Although these unfortunates may seem to suffer in this life and often to fall victim to greedy men, yet the Lord will cause all these things to work out to their good if they put their full trust in Him. The miracle of the multiplying oil is typical of what God can and will do, though usually in less spectacular ways, to help such bereaved ones (see Ps. 68:5; Jer. 49:11; MB 110; MH 202–204).

**26. The thoughts.** From thoughts spring actions (Prov. 23:7; Mark 7:21). Merely to be prevented by external circumstances from carrying out a purposed evil act does not leave the soul guiltless.

**27. Hateth gifts.** The subject of this verse seems to be chiefly the taking of bribes to pervert judgment (see Deut. 16:19; Isa. 1:23; Eze. 22:12). The man who is so greedy for gain that he stoops to sell his honor does not gain enduring wealth. Sooner or later, his actions become known, and the household that has lived in unearned luxury finds itself poor.

**28. Studieth to answer.** The good man thinks over what he is about to say, not only that it may prove the more helpful, but lest in haste he should say something that would hurt another (see Prov. 15:2; Matt. 12:35, 36).

**29. Far from the wicked.** The Lord is not far from anyone, except from those who refuse to seek Him. Those who put their own desires before obedience to God, find that their sins have separated them from Him (see Prov. 15:8; Isa. 59:1–4).

**30. Good report.** Solomon points to the close relation between the thoughts of the mind, or the moods indulged in, and the physical condition of the body (see v. 13; ch. 16:24).

**31. Reproof of life.** That is, the counsel that guides in the way of eternal life (see vs. 5, 10, 32).

**32. Despiset.** Those who refuse instruction are careless of their life. The issues at stake may appear small, but every decision affects eternal destiny (see ch. 8:36).

**33. Before honour.** The fear of the Lord is true humility. Such a state is necessary in order to receive the instruction that can make one wise. In wordly affairs it is equally true that genuine honor is gained by those who are humble enough to learn from those who have gone before how to climb the ladder of success (see Prov. 18:12; Matt. 23:12; James 4:6). In the example of Christ, humility and suffering came before great exaltation (Phil. 2:5–11; Heb. 12:2; 1 Peter 1:11).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 AH 439; Ed 114; MH 486, 497; ML 81, 111, 179; MYP 136; 3T 182; 4T 65, 348, 367; 5T 404
- 2 Ed 225
- 3 CH 302
- 7 PK 34

8 GW 257; 4T 534  
13 AH 421, 430; CH 28; ML 177, 195  
23 AH 434; Ev 430; MYP 125; 4T 348; 6T 233, 248, 267; 7T 15  
27 PP 168  
33 ML 332; PP 553; 5T 50

## CHAPTER 16

**1. In man.** This verse should be translated so as to show the contrast that is evident in Hebrew, “The counsels of the heart are man’s, but the answer of the tongue is the Lord’s.” The truth of this proverb is illustrated in the experience of Balaam. This covetous prophet planned to curse Israel and to gain the rewards offered by Balak, but the Lord, in whose name he claimed to speak, controlled the words that came out of his mouth (Num. 22–24). Particularly, when a man is speaking for God, are the words supplied (Ex. 4:12; Jer. 1:7; Matt. 10:19).

**2. Are clean.** Though most men are aware of defects in their lives, they seldom deliberately sin without in a measure justifying themselves. They may compare themselves with others and decide that, in view of their background and difficulties, they are at least as good as others are. Or they may reason that they have certain weaknesses in view of which the Lord will forgive occasional deviations from right. They accept the standards that God has set up, but are not ready to keep them to the full.

The man who is still a law to himself is certain that his ways are pure. How can his conclusions be otherwise when the only standard of judgment he possesses is his own? It is the work of the Holy Spirit to break through this complacency and to bring the conviction that there is an absolute standard, most clearly stated in the Word of God and most effectively illustrated and exemplified in the life of Christ. Only the Creator of mankind knows the underlying motives in the self-deceiving hearts of men, and He uses every agency of heaven to bring a conviction of the need of a Saviour and of the sufficiency of divine power for regeneration (see Prov. 21:2; 24:12; Jer. 17:9, 10; John 16:8; James 2:12; COL 159).

**3. Commit.** Heb. *galal*, “to roll.” We are admonished literally to “roll thy way upon the Lord” (Ps. 37:5).

**Established.** When a man recognizes his own need and turns to the Lord for guidance and help in every act and decision, then the powers of heaven come to his aid and enable him to carry out the decisions reached under the influence of the Holy Spirit. When he is thus imbued the very devils marvel at the change wrought in formerly weak, vacillating, yet proud and stubborn human hearts (see TM 18).

**4. For himself.** Does this passage mean that in God’s plan He created wicked men upon this earth for the purpose of eventually punishing and destroying them? This text has been used to support the dreadful doctrine of reprobation, which teaches that God deliberately created some men to suffer eternal punishment. The first clause literally translated reads, “God made everything with respect to its end [or answer, or response].” The word here translated “himself” is translated “answer” in chs. 15:1 and 16:1. This rendering suggests that the writer is speaking, not of the doctrine of reprobation, but merely of the eternal and unchangeable order of things that causes sin to bring suffering and death.

God made man upright, but when man sought out many inventions and sinned (Eccl. 7:29), he made himself suited only to destruction in the day of the consummation of all things. Those who use their free will and choose to be reborn (John 3:3, 7), become fitted for eternal life and will eventually inherit a purified world (2 Peter 3:13). God made everything to meet the fate for which

it had become suited—in the case of man, by his own choice, and the rest of earthly creation by its innocent involvement in the ruin that man has brought. Thus the Lord assures us that He has foreseen and prepared against every eventuality. There will never be an immortal sinner, saddening heaven by his suffering throughout eternity (see on Ex. 4:21).

**5. Proud in heart.** God cannot do anything for the proud heart which feels no need of His help. Spiritual self-conceit is the most dangerous form of pride, for it fills the soul with a feeling of self-sufficiency that prevents the Holy Spirit from bringing conviction of need.

**Hand join in hand.** There is uncertainty as to the exact meaning of this expression. Some suggest that the figure refers to violent acts; others, that it refers to the adding of the strength of one hand to the other in resistance to the Lord; and still others believe that it is a form of affirmation, as if to say, “Here is my hand on it.” The last suggestion is probably the least likely, since the handshake was not so used in Solomon’s time. One thing is sure, the proud heart can never be regarded as innocent (see Prov. 29:23; Isa. 25:11; Matt. 23:12; Phil. 2:8; COL 154, 161; MB 19).

**6. Mercy and truth.** To love God and man with all the heart, to be faithful in the fulfillment of promises and duties, and to hold fast the truth of God, is to cease to be a sinner and to become a true servant of God. It is the departing from evil, not the giving of gifts or the offering of many sacrifices, that brings a man into favor with Heaven. This teaching was vastly different from the attitude of many in that day who multiplied sacrifices in the hope of buying the favor of God without the necessary cleansing of the life and works (see Prov. 3:3; 14:22; 20:28; Matt. 22:37).

**7. At peace.** When a man lives as God would have him live, the enmity of his foes is often assuaged by his goodness, quite apart from the special intervention of God, although the Lord stands ready to intervene should it be necessary, as in the case of Jacob and Esau (Gen. 32:6–11; cf. PP 198).

**8. Righteousness.** This expression may refer either to a holy life or to upright dealing; “without right” may refer to the opposite of either. Riches without righteousness bring no peace of mind and cannot guarantee health of body, nor is there contentment in the possession of ill-gotten gain. But the little that the righteous man has gained in right ways brings a full return of happiness and arouses no envy or cupidity (see chs. 13:7, 25; 15:16).

**9. The Lord directeth.** Everything that we do is done by the life that God lends us and therefore by His permission. Man devises but does not know whether he will live to carry out his plans. Obviously, in recognition of this truth some Christian people adopted the custom of saying, “God willing,” when they announced their future plans (see James 4:13–15).

It is necessary for man to plan wisely for his future actions, but all such plans should be checked against the revealed will and law of God in order that he may be sure they are in harmony with the divine standards. Deliberations should be conducted with a prayer for guidance and a willingness to have the proposed plans changed or obstructed by the Lord (see Luke 12:17–20; MB 150).

**10. A divine sentence.** Heb. *qesem*, generally used of false divinations (Deut. 18:10; Jer. 14:14; Eze. 13:6). Here the word seems to be used in a good sense. The implication seems to be that a king speaks words that are inspired by more than human wisdom. In Solomon’s case this is true, and both Saul and David began their reigns with evidence that God was with them (see 1 Sam. 10:6, 7; 16:3; 1 Kings 4:29, 30). Perhaps the verse means, “Since kings are regarded as speaking with more than human wisdom, they should be especially careful not to sin in making decisions.”

**11. His work.** Honesty in business is governed by the eternal principles of God’s government (see ch. 11:1).

**12. An abomination.** Since kings are the servants of God, and do His work, standing in His place to govern the people, wickedness in a king is worse than in ordinary men. For this reason the thrones of evil kings are taken from them, whereas righteous governments are given a continued existence (see Dan. 4:17; Rom. 13:1–6; PK 535).

**13. Righteous lips.** Himself truthful, a good king loves and honors those who are honest and upright among his courtiers and subjects (see ch. 8:6, 7).

**14. Wrath..** The despot wields arbitrary power. His displeasure means death; consequently wise men try to keep themselves in the favor of the king (see chs. 19:12; 20:2). There is no intention here to defend such despotism, but men are advised how to live with such tyranny (see Eccl. 8:2–4).

**15. The latter rain..** This statement gives a contrast to v. 14. The clouds that bring the latter rain swell the grain that was sown in the time of the former rain in the autumn of the previous year (see Job 29:23; Jer. 5:24). Similarly, the protection of the king's favor provides an environment that encourages progress (see Ps. 72:6).

**16. Much better.** The favor of kings is likely to bring more material prosperity than intellectual advance. When men subordinate their own ideas to those of a ruler and go against their own convictions to obey him, wisdom and understanding are sure to suffer. It is unlikely that Solomon intended to indicate that wisdom was as much better than understanding as gold is than silver, but rather that both these qualities are more valuable than the metals for which men strive so earnestly (see chs. 3:14; 8:10, 11).

**17. The highway.** The way of the righteous is lifted up above the world with its temptations, which lure into sinful paths that end in ruin. He who is concerned to bring himself into harmony with the plan of God will carefully consider the path he treads, to be sure that his feet have not strayed (see Prov. 4:26; 15:19; 2 Tim. 2:19).

**18. Pride.** Despite the oft-repeated warnings against pride, every generation sees men becoming proud and haughty, only to fall into trouble and disgrace (see v. 19; chs. 11:2; 17:19; 18:12). Those who maintain their pride and position throughout this life will be forced into humble acknowledgement of God in the judgment (see GC 670, 671).

**19. An humble spirit.** Poverty is preferable to riches that will disappear and leave a man defenseless in the day of wrath (see chs. 15:17; 16:8).

**20. Handleth a matter.** The first clause may also be translated, "He that giveth heed unto the word shall find good." Thus translated, this verse states a vital though well-known truth. If any man gives due heed to the Word of God, he will not fail to prosper mentally, spiritually, and physically, and find happiness in all that he does (see John 13:17; James 1:25; DA 314).

**21. Prudent.** Wisdom will be recognized even by foolish men who do not use it themselves.

**Sweetness of the lips..** That is, agreeable, attractive speech. The truth of the second clause has always been acknowledged, but the propagation of the human voice over large areas of the world by means of modern electronic equipment has made the winsome voice of much greater influence, not only in commercial matters, but in the spreading of the gospel as well (see vs. 23, 24, 27; ch. 27:9).

**22. Instruction.** Heb. *musar*, which may also mean "chastisement," or "chastening," and is at times so translated (see Deut. 11:2; Prov. 3:11; Isa. 26:16; 53:5). Understanding provides its possessor with a continual supply of refreshment and power, but folly brings nothing but chastening to the fool (see Prov. 1:7; 7:22; 15:5).

**23. Teacheth his mouth.** Perhaps meaning, "makes his speech wise." The judicious words of a wise man attract the hearers and make the truth more palatable (see 6T 400).

**24. Health.** It has always been known that pleasant words are sweet, but the more precise

relation between words, moods, and health has remained for this age of experimentation to demonstrate. Querulous, antagonistic speech brings ill-health both to the speaker and to the hearer; but kindly, soothing words bring healing to the whole body (see PP 556).

**25. Seemeth right.** See on ch. 14:12.

**26. Laboureth for himself.** It is need for food, clothing, and shelter that generally drives a man to work. Of the three the appetite is the chief urge. By the sweat of his face man supplies his needs (see Gen. 3:19; Eccl. 6:7; 2 Thess. 3:10).

**27. An ungodly man.** Literally, “a man of Belial,” meaning, “a man of worthlessness.”

**Diggeth up evil.** Probably in the sense that the wicked man digs a pit to trap his neighbor, and plots evil against him. Or the clause may mean that he digs for evil as a man might dig a well for water. The fact that his words are said to scorch like a fire suggests that the first clause refers to his plotting evil against his neighbors rather than to his own delight in learning of evil (see James 3:6).

**28. A whisperer.** Calumny stirs up strife and antagonizes friends by spreading reports that are often false, and almost always exaggerated (see chs. 17:9; 18:8).

**30. Moving his lips.** Literally, “pinching his lips,” “biting his lips,” or “compressing his lips.” So determined is the crafty, malignant man that when he has narrowed his eyes to plan for some perversity and tightened his lips to hide a cruel smile, the evil is as good as done (see chs. 6:14; 10:10).

**31. The hoary head.** When the aged are found in the way of righteousness, they crown the achievements of their lives by their sage advice and good influence; but there is a saddening incongruity about the gray-headed man or woman who persists in taking the way of evil (see ch. 20:29; MH 204, 205).

**32. The mighty.** Successful military leaders have always been accorded much praise and have been regarded as the mighty men; but self-control is a better claim to honor (see James 3:2; DA 301).

**33. The lot.** It is not the desire of the Lord that man should decide every matter by a procedure like that of casting lots. When there is good evidence, or a pertinent principle, to guide the mind in coming to a decision, the use of the lot weakens both the mind and the character. The lot should be employed only if God specifically directs; otherwise there can be no assurance of an inspired answer.

The method by which the Hebrews cast lots is in some doubt. The word translated “lot” literally means “pebble,” suggesting that stones were used, perhaps of varied colors or of peculiar shapes. This verse seems to indicate that the stones, at times at least, were thrown into a fold of the bosom of a robe, shaken, and then drawn out (see Joshua 18:10; Prov. 18:18; Acts 1:23–26; PP 494, 495).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 TM 438

7 7T 243

12 Ed 175; GC 277, 415; PK 502

17 4T 502

18 ML 332; 4T 377

22 AH 266; ML 154

24 Ed 197; ML 152

25 GC 597

31 CG 144; Ed 244

32 AH 443; CG 95; ML 70; MYP 134; 2T 164, 426; 3T 183; 4T 501

## CHAPTER 17

**1. Sacrifices.** Only a part of the animal for a peace offering was burned. The rest, except for the portion for the priest, was eaten by the offerer, his family, and friends (see Lev. 7:11–18). Eating and drinking to excess naturally leads to strife, because the abuse of the stomach is reflected in an excitability of both body and mind (see Prov. 15:16, 17; Prov. 16:8).

**2. A wise servant.** Household slaves often gained a high position and were sometimes even made heirs (see Gen. 15:2, 3; 41:37–45; 2 Sam. 16:4; Eccl. 10:7).

**3. Fining pot.** As the refiner purifies fine metals, so the Lord cleanses the hearts of His people in the fires of affliction (Jer. 17:10; Mal. 3:3; 3T 541; 4T 85).

**4. A wicked doer.** Evildoers delight in listening to those who think as they do. They find comfort and support in their company as well as pleasure in the evil discussed. “Birds of a feather” tend to “flock together.”

**5. Glad at calamities.** The contrast suggests that the sort of calamity here referred to was that which brings men to poverty. Those who thrive upon the troubles of the poor gain a high rate of return upon their investment, but they earn, too, a crushing measure of remorse in the day when they see themselves as God sees them. Then, indeed, they would gladly throw themselves at the feet of the glorified saints they harmed and beg for a small portion of their eternal joys (see Job 31:29; Prov. 14:31; 24:17, 18; Matt. 25:40–46; Luke 12:3; 4T 386; EW 294; GC 668).

**6. Children’s children.** Wise planning for sons and grandsons and a proper respect for parents serve as stabilizing influences in the family and in the state (see Ps. 127:5).

**7. Excellent speech.** Good speech gives a deceptive veneer to the evil man, but lying of any kind tarnishes the honor of those in authority (see Isa. 32:5–8).

**8. A gift.** Heb. *shochad*, specifically a “bribe,” though the word may also designate a gift. *Shochad* is translated “bribe” in 1 Sam. 8:3; Ps. 26:10; Isa. 33:15. A bribe so dazzles the eyes of the recipient that he works hard to make himself worthy of the gift or to earn still further benefits. Solomon’s statement of the fact of such human behavior does not imply approval of it.

**9. Covereth a transgression.** That is, by not repeating it. This interpretation gives the proper contrast to the second clause. Those who persist in repeating stories of harm done by others often succeed in creating enmity between friends, even though the original transgression was small (see Prov. 16:28; 1 Cor. 13:6, 7; 2T 54; 4T 607).

**10. Entereth more.** That is, cuts deeper.

**11. Messenger.** Heb. *mal’ak*, also the word for “angel.” Perhaps divine judgments are indicated.

**12. A bear robbed.** The notorious anger of a she-bear robbed of her cubs is not so dangerous as the stubborn perversity of the fool (see Hosea 13:8).

**13. Evil for good.** See Prov. 20:22; Matt. 5:39; Rom. 12:17; 1 Thess. 5:15.

**14. Letteth out water.** Once water begins to pour through a bank, the opening is continually enlarged until there is a dangerous flood.

**Be meddled with.** Better, “bursts out,” or “rushes out.” One should guard against stirring up anger as one would care for a dike that holds back the waters of the sea.

**16. No heart.** That is, no mind or understanding. Money spent on the education of such a man is the same as wasted.

**17. At all times.** The mark of a true friend is that he stays by in trouble as if bound by the



ties of relationship (see ch. 18:24).

**18. Becometh surety.** See on ch. 6:1.

**19. Exalteth his gate.** Some have thought that this refers to building a lofty gateway that would make a small house seem to be a mansion. Such foolish ostentation would attract the attention of tax collectors and thieves, and thus invite destruction. However, we do not know that such customs anciently existed (see chs. 10:14; 16:18).

**20. Froward heart.** See on ch. 11:20.

**22. A merry heart.** A happy, rejoicing heart (see on ch. 15:13). To insist on rejoicing in the Lord, even when troubled or sick, is to release forces that will soothe and strengthen both mind and body (see ch. 16:24; Ed 197; MH 241). Cheerfulness often accomplishes what other remedies are powerless to achieve.

**23. A gift.** Bribery of any kind causes both the giver and the taker to sin. The Bible has much to say of this evil practice, which tends to make the rich richer and the poor poorer (see Ex. 23:8; Deut. 16:19; Isa. 1:23; Eze. 13:19).

**24. Wisdom.** The intelligent man concentrates upon his immediate business; the fool scatters his attention.

**26. To punish.** Heb. *Ôanash*, literally, “to fine.”

**To strike.** Heb. *nakah*, here probably, “to beat.”

**Princes.** Heb. *nedibim*, referring perhaps rather to the nobility of individuals than to their position in the kingdom, though “for equity” implies that they were beaten because they refused to pervert justice in their work as judges.

**27. Excellent.** Heb. *qar*, literally, “cool,” denoting a spirit that is slow to anger, not easily moved. The whole tenor of the writings of Solomon is against hasty, thoughtless speech (see Prov. 15:23; 18:6; 25:11; 29:20; Eccl. 5:2, 3; 10:14; 12:10). However, Masoretic tradition reads *yaqar*, “precious,” “prized.”

**28. Even a fool.** So closely are silence and wisdom linked in the minds of men that a fool could gain the reputation of being wise if he were able to achieve the impossible task of holding his peace. But the man who doubts his own wisdom cannot believe that this is so, and feels impelled to demonstrate his intelligence by much talk. Only those who have a firm confidence in their own understanding can sit quietly by until the time comes for the few wise words.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

9 2T 54; 4T 607

22 CH 28, 79; Ed 197; MH 241, 281; ML 151

27 Ed 135; 2T 426

## CHAPTER 18

**1. Through desire.** The verse reads literally, “One who is separated seeks for desire; he bursts out against all sound wisdom.” The meaning of the first clause is obscure. Perhaps the LXX has preserved the correct reading: “A man who wishes to separate from friends seeks excuses; but at all times he will be liable to reproach.”

**2. Discover itself.** That is, that the fool may speak his mind and reveal what he thinks is wisdom (see chs. 12:23; 13:16; 15:2; 17:28).

**4. A man’s mouth.** The ideal man is evidently referred to. Some men’s words are shallow (see Prov. 20:5; Eccl. 7:24).

**5. Accept the person.** Compare Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; Prov. 24:23–25; 28:21.

**6. Calleth for strokes.** The fool gets into trouble because of his ill-advised words.

**7. His destruction.** When the fool expresses his thoughts he reveals his folly and sinfulness. Thus it is his mouth that brings him to punishment.

**8. Wounds.** Heb. *mithlahamim*, occurring only here and in ch. 26:22. It is thought to come from a verb meaning “to swallow greedily”, and hence *mithlahamim* has been assigned the meaning “sweet morsels”. The clause would thus express the idea that slander is swallowed with avidity and preserved in the memory for later use.

**9. Slothful.** The lazy man fails to produce his quota, and thus ranks with the one who wastes and destroys (see chs. 10:4; 12:11; 23:21).

**10. A strong tower.** The name of the Lord stands for all that God is to His people. When Moses asked to see the glory of God, he was permitted to hear the name of the Lord proclaimed in the form of a description of God’s loving-kindness and forgiveness (Ex. 33:18–34:7). Only the grace of God gives hope of salvation to the sinner. Covered by that grace, the sinner is as a fortress impregnable to Satan and his temptations (see DA 324; TM 16, 18; MB 173).

**11. Conceit.** Heb. *maśskith*, rendered “image” (Lev. 26:1), “pictures” (Num. 33:52), and here thought to mean “imagination,” or “conceit.” The LXX renders this second clause, “and its glory casts a broad shadow.” The rendering “protecting” (see RSV) is derived from an alteration of the Hebrew text, reading for the root of *masśkith*, *sśakak* (*sakak*) instead of *sśakah*. It is only in appearance that riches form a strong tower. Some shift in the market, some series of misfortunes, and the protection is gone. The defense that God offers is both real and indestructible (see Prov. 10:15; 18:10).

**12. Before destruction.** Since destruction is the natural consequence of sin, and pride is the basic sin, it is to be expected that men’s hearts should reach the heights of haughtiness before the consequences of sin overtake them.

**Before honour.** Joseph, Moses, Daniel, went through the discipline of captivity or exile before their moments of greatest honor (see chs. 15:33; 16:18; 5T 50).

**14. Will sustain.** The brave spirit of many men and women who have suffered from crippling accidents or disease bears witness to the truth of the first clause. When the mind despairs or doubts, the body is also affected, and no physical medicine alone can effect a cure (see chs. 15:13; 17:22; MH 238, 241).

**15. Getteth knowledge.** While wisdom is more valuable than knowledge, those who possess a measure of wise prudence will be diligent in gaining knowledge, which they will use with discretion.

**16. Gift.** Some have taken this verse to mean that bribery enables a man to get in touch with those who can pervert justice to his gain, but this is not the necessary meaning. The word for “gift” here is different from the one translated “bribe” in the comment on ch. 17:8. Everyone loves a man who bestows gifts upon him (see ch. 19:6), and the donor soon gains access to distinguished circles as a welcome friend (see Luke 16:9).

**17. First.** That is, the first to plead his cause.

**Seemeth just.** A visit to a court of law will demonstrate the truth of this. It is natural, and it seems wise for a man to present his own case in the best possible light consistent with a relative version of the truth, but some have found that a frank confession of their guilt will cut the ground under the adversary’s feet and often win his friendship. This is best done, as the Saviour advised, while still on the way to the court (Matt. 5:25).

**18. The lot.** When both sides accept the decision of the Lord as revealed in the lot, further conflict between powerful litigants is prevented and their immediate quarrels are settled. On the

use of the lot see on Joshua 7:14; Prov. 16:33. Paul's counsel suggests that the use of the lot in settling such matters is not the normal method; instead, God gives wisdom to members of the church to judge the disputes of their brethren (1 Cor. 6:1–8).

**19. Offended.** It is difficult to translate the Hebrew of the first clause, as is indicated by the large number of supplied words in the KJV. The LXX renders this verse, "A brother helped by a brother is as a strong and high city; and is as strong as a well-founded palace." It is impossible to determine which reading is correct. Either makes a significant observation. The bitterness of civil wars and family feuds serves to illustrate the truth of the statement in the KJV.

**20. Fruit.** See on ch. 12:14.

**Lips.** See on ch. 10:19.

**21. They that love it.** The tongue can blacken a reputation and drive a man into poverty or death. Small as it is, the tongue can do vast harm. Used in harmony with the will of God to bless and to cheer or to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, the tongue can do great good. Those who love the tongue, who pamper it, who give it free reign, will do much harm, but the harm will return upon themselves (see Matt. 12:36; James 3; Ed 235; 5T 57).

**22. A good thing.** Obviously, Solomon is here speaking of the ideal wife, a virtuous, prudent woman who will loyally support him in efforts to serve the Lord (chs. 12:4; 19:14; 31:10; cf. MH 359). One who has been led to unite with such a woman has indeed received a favor from the Lord. That the wise man does not regard some wives in this way is shown by his comments on the nagging, querulous wife (chs. 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15).

**23. The poor.** The rich man can answer as he feels, men will take no open offense, because he is rich and they desire his friendship, but the poor man must measure his words lest he offend those upon whom his livelihood depends (see chs. 14:21; 17:5).

**24. Must shew himself friendly.** Heb. *lehithroÊeaÔ*, from the verb *raÔaÔ*, "to break." Hence the first clause reads literally, "a man of friends will be broken in pieces." The reading of the KJV is obtained by assuming that *lehithroÊeaÔ* comes from the verb *raÔah*, which seems to have the meaning "to associate with" (see Prov. 22:24; Isa. 11:7).

However, *lehithroÊaÔ*, is properly from *raÔaÔ* and not from *raÔah*. Assuming that the Hebrew is here misspelled, and that *lehithroÊeaÔ* is derived from *raÔah*, and assuming another slight change (*yesh* for *Êish*), an alternative translation would be "there are friends [merely] to be companions." Taking this or the literal translation, we get the idea that there are many friends who are not true friends, who exhaust our resources and will not stand by us in the day of calamity.

**Friend.** Literally, "lover." The primary meaning of this phrase is undoubtedly that friends sometimes remain faithful even when brothers have turned away (see ch. 17:17). The language of the expression may be conveniently applied to Christ, the true and faithful Friend, the One who never fails (see 2T 271).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

4 ML 207; PP 413

9 2T 500

10 DA 131; MB 173; MYP 50

12 5T 50

21 AH 441; Ed 235

22 MH 359

## CHAPTER 19

**1. His integrity.** “Poor but honest” may have been derived from this proverb. A proverb closely parallel substitutes “rich” for “fool” (ch. 28:6). Some have felt that “rich” should be understood here too, in order to have an effective contrast, but this is not necessary to the sense (see ch. 17:20).

**2. Sinneth.** Or, “misses the mark.” This interpretation suits the context equally well. Ignorance and haste are common causes of mistakes and sometimes of sin. For other practices listed that are not good see chs. 17:26; 18:5; 20:23; 24:23.

**4. Is separated.** See on ch. 14:20.

**5. Unpunished.** Even though the false witness escapes punishment in this life, he cannot escape the retribution in the next. His part will be outside the city (Rev. 21:8). Every idle word and every wicked word will come back to mind and convince the impenitent of the justice of his condemnation (see Ex. 20:16; Matt. 12:36; PK 252). This verse is repeated almost exactly in v. 9.

**6. The prince.** Because princes are usually rich and powerful, few fail to cultivate every opportunity to gain their favor.

**Giveth gifts.** See on ch. 18:16.

**7. His friends.** If a man’s own brothers come to hate the sight of the poor man for fear of having demands made upon them, who can blame his friends for forsaking him? The only exception would be the kind of friend that sticks closer than a brother (ch. 18:24). This is one of the few proverbs containing three parts. Some feel that originally there were probably two of the regular two-part proverbs. The LXX has a longer reading, which, though we cannot be certain of its accuracy, hints that probably the original contained more than what is found in the present Masoretic text. The rendering of the LXX for v. 7 is, “Every one who hates his poor brother shall also be far from friendship. Good understanding will draw near to them that know it, and a sensible man will find it. He that does much harm perfects mischief; and he that uses provoking words shall not escape.”

**8. Wisdom.** Literally, “heart.” Anciently the heart was regarded as the seat of the intellect.

**9. Unpunished.** See on v. 5.

**10. Delight.** Heb. *taÔanug*, “daintiness”, “luxury.” A fool cannot resist the corrupting influences of delicate living, nor can a servant rule without developing arrogance (see Eccl. 10:6, 7).

**11. Deferreth.** Compare Prov. 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; James 1:19.

**Pass over.** Some feel that they can best gain glory by demonstrating a stern regard for justice, but the glory of God is shared by those who are quick to forgive when forgiveness may open the way for reclaiming the offender.

**12. The king’s wrath.** Compare chs. 16:14; 20:2.

**13. Calamity.** Heb. *hawwoth*, “engulfing ruin,” “destruction.” Compare chs. 10:1; 15:20; 17:21, 25.

**Continual dropping.** Leaking roofs were common in the East, and the constant dripping tried the nerves of the inhabitants much as does a nagging woman (see ch. 27:15).

**14. Of fathers.** That is, from fathers. By contrast as prudent wife is a special gift from God (see ch. 18:22).

**15. Deep sleep.** Heb. *tardemah*, used to describe the unconsciousness of Adam when Eve was formed from his rib (Gen. 2:21). *Tardemah* also occurs in Gen. 15:12; 1 Sam. 26:12; Job

4:13; 33:15; Isa. 29:10. Laziness has such a soporific effect upon a man's senses that he goes about in a daze. Hunger is the fate that awaits such a man (see Prov. 10:4; 12:24; 20:13; 23:21).

**16. His own soul.** Compare ch. 16:17.

**17. Lendeth.** The care of the poor, in contrast with the neglect practiced without shame by other nations, is an evidence of a divine revelation to the Israelites. The thought that such care makes God our debtor is remarkable. It is in line with the claim Christ made when He said that He regards ministration to the poor a personal service to Him (Matt. 25:40; cf. Prov. 11:24; 28:27).

**18. Let not thy soul spare.** This clause reads literally, "Do not lift up thy soul to kill him." The translation of the KJV is based upon the medieval Jewish interpretation, which teaches that it is better for the son to weep under chastening now than for the father to weep over the eternal loss of his son later. In contrast, the literal translation makes the clause a warning against such angry punishment as might slay the son. Or it may be a warning to the father not to neglect chastisement, lest his son come to ruin. In Israel, a depraved son was to be brought before the elders for judgment and, if necessary, be executed (Deut. 21:18–21).

Early punishment is good punishment. Later, when a youth is set in his evil ways, there is less hope of reformation. Too often parents postpone punishment until a child is old enough to reason, only to discover that he is then in the grip of habits of behavior that can hardly be broken (see chs. 13:24; 23:13).

**19. Punishment.** To a man whose anger is beyond his control, lessons earlier learned are of no avail, for they are forgotten in the heat of passion. If you persuade the authorities to excuse his offense because he has learned his lesson, you will find that you were mistaken. Indeed, his wrath may well turn on you for your interference in his affairs.

**20. Latter end.** Aside from the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, men tend to be in age what they were in youth. The time to learn lessons of wisdom is in the early years of life. Childish ignorance or petulance, which is sometimes admired or excused in the very young, disgusts and annoys when exhibited in exaggerated forms later on.

**21. Counsel of the Lord.** Sinful men and fallen angels may devise countless schemes to prevent the Lord from carrying out His eternal purposes; nevertheless the counsels of God will be accomplished and the universe eventually cleansed from both sin and sinners. God expects His servants to submit their plans to His overruling providence (Prov. 16:9; Isa. 46:10; James 1:17; 7T 298).

**22. The desire.** The meaning of the first clause is not clear. Some interpret the statement as meaning that the intention is what counts in benevolence. A poor man who does all he can to help, even though that be little, is to be honored above one who promises much, but whose word cannot be trusted (see ch. 3:27, 28). The LXX renders this verse, "Mercy is a fruit to a man: and a poor man is better than a rich liar."

**23. Abide satisfied.** Some have felt that religion is a bar to health and happiness in this life, that pleasure here is sacrificed for promised joys in the hereafter. This is not true of a genuine "fear of the Lord" (see PP 600). Obedience to the laws of God leads to physical vigor, which is not sapped by indulgence in sinful amusements or vexing cares (see 6T 225). A Christian who worries is but half a Christian. With all care cast upon the Lord (1 Peter 5:7), with every action within his power accomplished, the servant of the Lord rests in the assurance that all the angels of heaven are available to ensure that nothing happens to him that is not for his ultimate good (see Rom. 8:28).

**24. In his bosom.** Literally, "in the dish." The translation "in his bosom" is based on the LXX, the Syriac, and some medieval Jewish expositors. The figure is taken from the ancient

custom of eating from a common dish. The slothful man dips his hand into the food, doubtless groping for the choicer morsels. Solomon sarcastically suggests that the lazy man will not trouble to lift the food to his mouth (see ch. 26:15).

**25. *Smite a scorner.*** The scorner is regarded as too hardened for the punishment to help him, but the simpleton who is not yet beyond reformation will take warning and learn prudence. The man of understanding does not need to be beaten or to see another so punished. He is quick to learn from a simple reproof (see 1 Tim. 5:20).

**26. *Chaseth away.*** He drives his mother away either by his behavior or by bringing his parents to poverty, so that they lose their home (see chs. 10:5; 17:2).

**28. *Scorneth judgment.*** He is not concerned with seeing justice done, so is willing to perjure himself to aid his friend or to harm the innocent. He is careless of the denunciations of the law of God against such practices (Ex. 20:16; Lev. 5:1).

***Devoureth iniquity.*** Compare Job 15:16; 20:12; Rom. 1:32.

**29. *Judgments.*** The love of iniquity and the damage done to the innocent will not go unpunished. Retribution is prepared for evil men.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

5 PK 252  
11 2T 426  
14 MH 359  
11 Ed 141; 6T 307  
18 CG 257  
23 6T 225; PP 600  
27 MB 208

## CHAPTER 20

**1. *Mocker.*** Heb. *les*\, translated “scorner” in ch. 19:29. This suggests that “wine,” the “mockers,” is here personified and that the statement does not assert that wine mocks men, but that men under the influence of wine and strong drink become scornful of right and religion.

***Strong drink.*** Fermented drinks made from other sources than grapes, such as pomegranates and dates (see on Deut. 14:26).

***Deceived.*** All intoxicating drinks are deceptive. Men think they are becoming stronger, wiser, quicker in action, and more eloquent as the amount they drink increases, whereas objective tests show that they are slowed down, rendered less efficient, and finally rendered incapable of coherent thought or speech. Intoxicating liquors are deceptive in another way. A man considers them quite harmless and believes that he can take them or leave them at will, yet drink gains an almost unshakable grip on its victims (see Prov. 23:29–35; Isa. 28:7; Eph. 5:18; MH 333–346).

**2. *Sinneth.*** One who stirs up the wrath of a king or other despotic ruler is taking his life in his hands and is likely to lose it (see chs. 8:36; 19:12).

**3. *An honour.*** Some feel that their honor must be defended by a quick resentment of any slur or slight, but this reveals a doubt as to the genuine nature of their position. One who is calmly confident of his position in relation to God and man will quietly ignore provocative remarks (see chs. 17:14; 19:11).

**4. *The cold.*** Literally, “autumn.” The statement does not imply that the sluggard fears the cold, but that he dislikes work. While eating what his farm has produced, he has not the pressure

of hunger to make him take the trouble to plow and sow for the next harvest. As an inevitable consequence, the next autumn finds him seeking to share the prosperity of the wise and the diligent.

**5. Draw it out.** Our modern word *education* means a “drawing out.” Wise teachers since the time of Socrates, and no doubt much earlier than that, have used skillful questioning to bring to the surface the hidden thoughts of the pupil. The student is led to relate to another the various items of information he has acquired and thus to increase in wisdom and understanding.

**6. A faithful man.** With everyone proclaiming his own goodness, how is it possible to discover men who are really trustworthy? Solomon has enumerated many characteristics of such men (see chs. 9:10; 10:31; 12:10; 13:5; 17:17, 27; 20:7; 21:3; 22:29).

**7. Integrity.** Consistency is a rare but valuable virtue. However poor, humble, or ignorant a man may be, if he is genuine and consistent, he will be recognized as a just man, and his children will honor him. Inconsistency in parents has a devastating effect upon the growing children.

**8. Scattereth.** Or, “winnows.” As the wind separates the chaff from the tossed wheat, so the wisdom of a wise judge discerns the truth and blows away the devices intended to obscure it. In like manner the Messiah will exalt truth and reveal error when He comes (Isa. 11:3, 4).

**9. Who can say?** Compare 1 John 1:8. This question is pertinent in view of the final revelation of truth (Eccl. 12:14).

**10. Divers weights.** See chs. 11:1; 16:11; 20:23.

**11. Even a child.** While all men reveal themselves through their works (Matt. 7:16–20), a child, because of his openness and freedom from dissimulation, shows more clearly his inner nature and gives some indication of the man he will become.

**12. The hearing ear.** God has given to all men the use of their senses, and He trusts that these senses will be employed by them to find their way to Him and to the path of righteousness (see Ex. 4:11). Few men use their talents to the full. Blind to the beauty of earth, sea, and sky, and deaf to the murmurings of the wind and the songs of the birds, many go on their way indifferent to all but material gain and common pleasures. God is looking for ears that are quick to respond to the voice of the Spirit and eyes that see clearly the way of life.

**13. Love not sleep.** See chs. 6:9–11; 12:11; 19:15; 23:21.

**14. It is naught.** To decry the value of what we buy and to exaggerate the good qualities of what we sell is human nature, but it is fallen human nature. True honesty demands that we endeavor objectively to discover the precise worth of a commodity, whether we are buying or selling (see 2T; 71; 4T 311, 359). Not only is honesty involved, but love for our fellow men is as essential to righteous living as love for our Creator (Luke 10:27). Observance of the golden rule will make us as considerate of others in selling as we are of ourselves in buying. These are high standards, but the goal before us is perfection (Matt. 5:43–48).

**15. Rubies.** See on ch. 3:15. Gold is highly valued, costly stones are regarded as rare, but both are common in comparison to instructed lips.

**16. Strange woman.** The KJV here follows the Masoretic marginal reading, in conformity with the repetition of the verse in ch. 27:13. The reading of the Hebrew text is “strangers.” Solomon repeatedly referred to the folly of being surety for anyone (chs. 6:1; 11:15; 17:18; 22:26). In this verse he enjoins severe treatment of a man who would take such a risk for a foreigner with whom he could not be intimately acquainted. The law forbade the taking of interest on a loan from a brother (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:35–37), but permitted even an Israelite to be sold into slavery for seven years or until the jubilee (see Ex. 21:2; Lev. 25:39, 42; Deut. 15:9). That this law was at times broken is evident from Ezekiel’s description of a sinner (Eze. 18:10–17), and Nehemiah’s reform among the returned exiles (Neh. 5:1–13). The taking of a

pledge was permitted, but if it were a garment, the creditor was required to return it at night (Deut. 24:10–13).

**17. Bread of deceit.** Or, “bread of lying.” Wickedness is sweet to some (Job 20:12), so that stolen food has an added zest when eaten, because it was gained without the labor of earning it. However, the consequences of deceit soon change the picture. Distrusted by all good men and driven to the company of deceivers like himself, or, perhaps, caught and punished, he finds that the sweetness has departed (see Job 20:14).

**18. By counsel.** With man’s limited ability and knowledge, it is wise to take counsel with others whom may see a different aspect of the matter or who have had more experience in circumstances similar to the one under consideration. The graver the problem, the more necessary such consultation (see chs. 11:14; 15:22).

**19. Him that flattereth.** Heb. *potheth*, from the verb *pathath*, which means either “to be open” or “to be simple.” Hence, “him that flattereth with his lips” is either “one who is open as to his lips” or “one who is foolish with his lips.”

**20. Obscure darkness.** Although one who broke the law by cursing his parents might anciently be put to death (Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9), it is probable that the evasion of the fifth commandment of which Christ complained had begun early (Matt. 15:4). The putting out of the lamp, or candle, of such a man might be interpreted as the taking of his life, but it is more probable that Solomon is here referring to the moral degradation that would characterize one who indulged in this mean sin. The “obscure darkness,” literally, “the pupil of darkness” (see on Prov. 7:2, 9), indicates the depths to which disrespect of parents causes a son to sink (see ch. 13:9).

**21. Gotten hastily.** This proverb is a reminder of the curt, “Easy come, easy go.” The sudden and easy accession of wealth is very different from the slow accumulation of riches by hard work and earnest effort. Without any comprehension of the toil by which the inheritance was gathered, the beneficiary has formed no habits of diligence and caution that would enable him to turn the money into a blessing to himself and others.

**22. Recompense.** With the example of Christ before them (1 Peter 2:23), Christians cannot fail to realize the necessity of resisting all impulses to take revenge. The Lord claims that vengeance is His (Heb. 10:30). Those who put their trust in Him will be so protected by the Lord that all the attacks of their enemies will turn out to be for their good (Rom. 8:28).

**23. Divers weights.** See on v. 10.

**24. Man’s goings.** Man is not able to order his own steps (Jer. 10:23; PK 420, 421). He cannot understand his own way, for he cannot see one step in front of him, and God may intervene at any moment to alter human plans (Prov. 16:25; 19:21; MH 417).

**25. Devoureth.** From the Heb. *laÔaÔ*, “to talk wildly.” The first clause may be translated, “It is a snare to a man that he should rashly cry, Holy!” This thought is similar to that of the LXX, which renders this verse, “It is a snare to a man hastily to consecrate some of his own property,” for in that case repentance comes after vowing. The vower who promises a gift to the Lord without due consideration and then realizes that the vow will cost more than he wishes to sacrifice falls into a trap (see Eccl. 5:2–6; 4T 470, 471).

**26. Scattereth.** Or, “winnoweth” (see on v. 8).

**Wheel.** In the East, iron-studded rollers, or planks with rows of sharp stones, were dragged over the wheat on the threshing floor (see Isa. 28:27; Amos 1:3). This verse does not indicate a literal punishment of evil men, but shows how the king “winnows” the good from the evil, and makes investigations that separate the chaff from the wheat (see Matt. 3:12).

**27. The candle of the Lord.** The Spirit of God speaking within a man searches the whole



man, his mind, his heart, his soul, reveals to him his condition and commends or else reproves as need may arise. The wisest animal can work only from memory, expediency, and instinct. Man can sit in judgment upon himself and assess his own acts according to a standard outside himself (Matt. 6:22, 23; 2T 512; SC 20, 27).

**28. Mercy and truth.** Here is a true philosophy of history. If every ruler had understood and practiced the implied counsel in this proverb, the history of the world would have been very different. Empire after empire has fallen because the rulers became careless of right and justice or became harsh and rigid without regard for mercy; whereas those kings who enthroned mercy in their hearts lived long and useful lives that benefited their subjects (see Prov. 16:12; Dan. 4:27; PK 501, 502).

**29. Strength.** A young man who has preserved the full vigor of his young manhood by clean living and hard work has a glory about him that no old man can boast, but the man of gray hairs who has been learning lessons from the way of righteousness throughout a long and useful life has a beauty and a glory of his own.

**30. The blueness of a wound.** Literally, “stripes [or blows] of a wound,” that is, “blows that cut in.” Blows that wound are the remedy for evil, not soothing ointments, and blows that strike deep are the most effective (see ch. 19:29; PP 327–326).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 DA 149, 222; MH 330, 333; Te 52, 92, 97

3 Ed 135

11 CG 151; 3T 80

19 Ed 135

22 MB 109

25 4T 471

28 Ed 175; PK 502

29 ML 130; 3T 142

## CHAPTER 21

**1. The king's heart.** Because of the great influence their position gives them, kings can affect large numbers of people. To cause all things to work together for good it is often necessary for God to turn the hearts of kings toward paths they would not otherwise have followed. Thus Cyrus was moved to order the Temple rebuilt (2 Chron. 36:22, 23; Isa. 44:28; Dan. 10:13). This directing of hearts does not interfere with a man's freedom to choose whether or not he will follow the path of salvation. In the judgment every soul will see that God has done everything possible to awaken a determination to surrender to the re-creating power of the Holy Spirit, and that he is lost because of his own refusal to make that surrender and to permit that power to work in him (see Isa. 45:22–24; John 1:9; Titus 2:11; GC 668).

**2. Is right in his own eyes.** See on ch. 16:2; cf. chs. 14:12; 16:25; 20:24.

**3. Than sacrifice.** Compare 1 Sam. 15:22.

**4. Plowing.** The ancient versions and a number of Hebrew manuscripts read “lamp.” In the Hebrew the difference is one only of vowels, the word for “plowing” being *nir* and the one for “lamp” *ner*. Light is probably used as a symbol of prosperity and joy. Arrogance, pride, and a selfish joy, which are not founded upon obedience, are all displeasing to God. The word *nir* actually means “to till for the first time” (see Jer. 4:3; Hosea 10:12).

**5. Thoughts of the diligent.** The plans of the hard-working man are likely to bring

prosperity because of the efforts put forth, while those of the hasty, careless worker will probably fail even if they are good plans. “Hasty” may also refer to those hasty to become rich (see ch. 28:20).

**6. A vanity tossed.** Literally, “a driven breath.” Those who seek to establish fame and fortune upon lies are a mere breath that will suddenly pass away.

**7. Destroy them.** The unjust behavior of the wicked brings its own results (see Ps. 9:15; Prov. 1:18, 19).

**9. Housetop.** In ancient Palestine for most of the year a man might live in comparative comfort on the flat roof of his house (see 1 Sam. 9:25, 26). Solomon contends that it is better to be exposed to the wind and rain than to the quarrelsome and vexing tongue of a contentious woman (see Prov. 19:13; 27:15).

**10. Findeth no favour.** To a man of evil desires, nothing seems so important as the carrying out of his wicked plottings. Vice makes a man selfish and hardhearted, not only to his neighbor, but to his own family (see Isa. 26:10).

**11. Is made wise.** Compare ch. 19:25.

**12. The righteous man.** Some render this expression “a [or the] righteous One,” and apply it to God, thus avoiding the need to insert a different subject for the second clause. God keeps watch over the just and the unjust, to protect the one and to bring down the other when he becomes a menace (Job 12:19; Prov. 22:12). However, the correct translation of this verse is a matter of uncertainty. The ancient versions retain the idea “righteous man.” The LXX renders the verse, “A righteous man understands the hearts of the ungodly; and despises the ungodly for their wickedness.”

**13. Stoppeth his ears.** Callous behavior may bring retribution in this life and is certain to be visited in the judgment to come (see Prov. 14:21; Matt. 18:23–35; 25:41–46; Luke 6:38; James 2:13).

**16. Of the dead.** To forsake understanding, to reject the fear of the Lord, is to ensure for oneself an eternal place with the dead (Mal. 4:1; Rev. 20:9).

**17. Loveth pleasure.** Pleasure is here paralleled with wine and oil. Feasting and carousing typify the prodigality that produces want.

**18. A ransom.** Heb. *kopher*, here not to be construed in a religious sense. There is nothing in the rest of the Scriptures to support the idea that the salvation of the righteous is in any way dependent on the wicked. The second clause, compared with a similar passage (ch. 11:8), suggests that the trouble from which the righteous is saved comes upon those who refuse the way of salvation. *Kopher* occurs in Isa. 43:3, where God says, “I gave Egypt for thy ransom.”

**19. Angry woman.** See on v. 9.

**20. Oil.** Instead of “oil” the LXX has a verb, “will rest.” This version renders the verse, “A desirable treasure will rest on the mouth of the wise; but foolish men will swallow it up.”

**21. Righteousness.** Not one who seeks to find righteousness and mercy from God is here pointed out, but one who deals uprightly and mercifully with others.

**22. Casteth down.** When wisdom proves itself mightier than the might of those who think force is the only thing worth striving for, they lose confidence in material power.

**23. Keepeth his mouth.** See on ch. 13:3; cf. ch. 18:21.

**24. Proud wrath.** Critics of holy things are often filled with such an excess of pride in their own abilities that there seems no limit to the skeptical attacks they are willing to make (see 2 Peter 3:3–7).

**25. Killeth him.** Everything that makes for success and honor in this life and the next seems

to die away from the slothful, leaving them little better than the brute beasts (see chs. 13:4; 19:24).

**27. A wicked mind.** Any sacrifice made by an unrepentant sinner is unacceptable (see on ch. 15:8), how much more when it is brought with some evil design, either to bribe the Lord to overlook his sin or to make an appearance of piety to deceive men. Yet there are many who give to church or charity a share of the proceeds of their extortionate dealings with a vague idea that they have made things right with God (see MH 340).

**28. The man that heareth.** The meaning of this clause is uncertain. Some interpret it as observing that the word of “the man that heareth” stands unchallenged continually because his ear is quick to hear the commands of God and the counsel of man. The LXX renders the clause “an obedient man will speak cautiously.” By contrast the word of a liar perishes when it meets truth (see chs. 6:19; 19:5, 9).

**29. Directeth his way.** The bold, unprincipled man takes a position without concern for right or wrong and then is too obstinate to change. The upright man is quick to change a way that further consideration shows to be wrong. It is this continual desire to live in harmony with the will of God that fits him for heaven.

**30. Against the Lord.** The Hebrew for “against” may also be translated “before,” that is, “in the presence of” (Num. 22:32). Both meanings give good sense in this passage. Created beings have no wisdom or understanding that can compare with that of the Lord, nor can they defeat His counsels (Acts 4:25–30).

**31. Safety.** The horse is a symbol of military might. However well men may prepare for war, or any other great enterprise, victory or success is of the Lord (see Ps. 20:7; 33:17; 1 Cor. 15:57).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 4T 537
- 4 4T 335
- 6 AH 391; Ed 136
- 21 ML 205
- 27 PK 323

## CHAPTER 22

**1. Loving favour.** Literally, “good favor [or grace].” A worthy name and good favor, both won by an upright life, are true riches (see Eccl. 7:1). Both may be lost by associating with those who lack a good name, even though we do not actually join them in their questionable ways. A young person often finds excitement in the company of those of lower standards of mind and morals without the least thought of imitating them. But the excitement is dearly bought. There is loss of good name and the danger of adopting some of their ways of thought and action after familiarity has blunted the moral sensibilities.

**2. Rich and poor.** God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). All are His children, and He seeks the salvation of all (Titus 2:11). The rich and poor inevitably meet together. The rich are dependent upon the poor for the many services that wealth can buy, and for the acquiring of that wealth. When rich men recognize their brotherhood with, and dependence upon, the poor, and use their wealth for the advancement of the general good, God accepts the action as being done in His service. When poor men faithfully serve those who employ them, they too serve the Master

of all (see Prov. 14:31; 17:5; Matt. 25:40; Eph. 6:5, 6; 1 Peter 2:18).

**3. A prudent man.** There is an interesting contrast between the singular and the plural in the two parts of this verse: “prudent man” is singular and “simple” is plural. Farseeing men are rare, the simple are common.

**4. Riches.** Riches, honor, and life are the rewards most men covet, but only through humility and godliness can they be truly enjoyed (see ch. 21:21).

**6. In the way he should go.** Literally, “according to the mouth of his way,” that is “according to his way.” Many parents have taken this verse as sanction for forcing a child to follow the profession or trade they think he ought to. Thus they have brought sorrow and disappointment upon themselves, for the child, on growing up, often goes an entirely different way. The verse rather counsels parents to learn the way in which their particular child can be expected to be of most service to himself and others, and in which he will find most happiness. The specific station in life appointed for a man is determined by his capabilities (Ed 267). To every individual God has assigned a place in His great plan (PK 536). God has equipped man with the capabilities needed to fill this special place. Therefore the choice of a lifework should be in line with the natural bent. The efforts of the parents and the child should be directed toward discovering the kind of work Heaven has already determined. Inspiration declares that this verse enjoins parents to “direct, educate, develop,” but that to do this “they must themselves understand the ‘way’ the child should go” (CT 108).

**7. The rich ruleth.** There is the contrast between the singular and the plural evident in the Hebrew, “rich” being in the singular and “poor” in the plural (see on v. 3).

**8. Reap vanity.** We reap what we sow (Job 4:8; Gal. 6:7). The rod of insolence will fall from the hands of the wicked, perhaps now, but certainly when the day of judgment and retribution dawns.

**9. Shall be blessed.** Another aspect of the rule in v. 8. One who sows bounty reaps blessing (2 Cor. 9:6).

**10. Shall go out.** Quarreling and abuse cease when scoffing is replaced by respectful acceptance and service of God (see ch. 26:20). To permit the scornful man to remain in our company is to invite trouble. There must be an element of decided selection in our formation of a group of close friends (1 Cor. 5:11).

**11. The king.** In contrast with the scorner in the previous verse, the pure in heart speaks gently and creates peace wherever he goes. Such a one is welcome even in royal courts, for his praise is so obviously sincere (see ch. 16:13).

**12. Preserve knowledge.** While the LORD watches over and protects the man who has knowledge, He counters the plans of the disobedient and brings them to nought.

**13. A lion without.** The absurdity of the excuses a lazy man makes for his sloth reveals the extent of the deterioration wrought in his character. The chances of a man-eating lion or a murderer being loose in the streets of a town or village at any given time were very small, yet are made an excuse for continuing sloth (ch. 26:13).

**14. Abhorred.** The man whose heart has resisted the appeals of the Spirit of God until he no longer hears the voice of guidance is spoken of as being hated by the Lord (see Ps. 5:5; Prov. 3:32; Rom. 9:13). Without that guidance he falls into the pitfalls of Satan.

**15. Foolishness.** The outworkings of heredity in the minds of little children so consistently show themselves in waywardness and mischief that foolishness seems an essential part of childishness, and it is the work of parents to endeavor by the judicious use of correction and instruction, to overcome the evil they themselves have passed on to their children (see chs. 19:18; 23:13; 29:15).

**16. Come to want.** There seems to be no adequate explanation of this verse. A literal translation is, “The oppressor of the poor to cause increase to him, the giver to the rich, only to poverty.” The LXX renders the verse, “He that oppresses the poor, increases his own substance, yet gives to the rich so as to make it less.”

**17. Hear the words.** Some have thought that this verse, with its call to hearken, is the beginning of a new section of the book (see chs. 1:1; 10:1). Verses 17–21 form a continuous piece of writing in contrast with the brief, isolated proverbs before and after them.

**19. Thy trust may be.** These proverbs are written that we may put our trust in the Lord rather than in man. While they inculcate wisdom, they emphasize that there is no true wisdom apart from the fear of the Lord (see chs. 1:7; 9:10; 15:33).

**20. Excellent things.** Heb. *shalishom*, obviously a misspelling and so corrected in Masoretic tradition to *shalishim*, which means “officers” (see on 2 Kings 7:2). From this new reading some have derived the improbable meaning “excellent things.” The consonantal Hebrew of the text may also be translated “formerly,” that of tradition, “thirty,” and here, “thirty sayings.” The LXX adopts the numerical idea and reads, “three times,” perhaps in the sense of “repeatedly.”

**21. The certainty.** The wise man well understood the desire for certainty. Many evidently came to him, or sent messengers to find an assured answer to the problems of life and death. It is possible that a number of proverbs that follow were especially written for such a messenger to take back to his master. If this was the case, it may be that the entire section to the end of ch. 24 was part of this reply, since ch. 25 begins the proverbs copied out by Hezekiah’s scribes (see ch. 25:1).

**22. Because.** This counsel would seem to be for judges who sat “in the gate” (see Ruth 4:1–11), to warn them against favoring the rich and oppressing the poor in order to gain personal profit.

**23. Plead their cause.** The Lord will take up the cause of the afflicted and will bring them justice, sometimes by miraculous means (see 2 Kings 4:1–7).

**Spoil the soul.** That is, take the life.

**24. No friendship.** One danger in consorting with a man given to fits of passion is that his anger and impatience may breed a similar reaction in his associates. There is also the possibility of suffering directly from his rage.

**26. Sureties for debts.** Compare chs. 6:1; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16. The idea that this is a special selection of proverbs written for an inquirer is supported by this repetition.

**28. Ancient landmark.** Land was marked out by little piles of stones or by larger pillars where these were available. Without accurate surveying methods it was easy to move a landmark and defraud the one defrauded to prove that it had been moved. That such removal was a common offense may be judged from the enactments against it (Deut. 19:14; 27:17; cf. Job 24:2; Prov. 15:25).

**29. Diligent.** Diligence is not sufficient in itself to advance a man to high office, although it is a very necessary quality for success in any sphere. The Hebrew word has also the meaning of “skillful” (translated “ready” in Ezra 7:6). Combined, the idea presented is of a man quick, skillful, and ready to serve.

**Stand before kings.** The Bible narrative provides glowing accounts of the lives of men in whom the truth here stated was exemplified. The Christian can find no better human examples than those of such men as Joseph, Daniel, and Paul.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 22

In 1922 the scholarly world learned through a preliminary announcement that another Egyptian work of wisdom literature had been discovered, which swelled the number of such works known from ancient Egypt. This document, written on a papyrus scroll and purchased by the British Museum in 1888, was published by Sir Ernest A. W. Budge in 1923. It contained a collection of proverbs whose author bears the name Amenemope. In 1924, Prof. A. Erman published a study in which he pointed out that there are numerous parallels between this Egyptian book of proverbs and the proverbs of Solomon, notably those found in chapters 22 and 23. Since that time many scholarly treatises have appeared on this subject, and modern Bible commentators, generally, hold that Solomon borrowed certain proverbs from Amenemope.

That there are a number of close parallels is evident, but this does not prove the direction of dependency. Since the fame of Solomon's wisdom spread to distant nations, Amenemope may have taken over proverbs from Solomon just as well as Solomon may have from Amenemope. The solution of the problem of priority depends on the time of origin of both collections of proverbs. The history of Israel knows of only one possible author of Proverbs in Old Testament times, and that was Solomon, who lived in the 10th century B.C., as all historians agree.

On the other hand, the time in which Amenemope lived is not known. A study of the document containing his proverbs presents the following picture. The experts, dating ancient Egyptian manuscripts by the form of handwriting, say that it can hardly have been written before the Egyptian king Takelot I (about 893–870 B.C.) of the Twenty-second Dynasty, but may have been written as late as the 4th century B.C. The names found in the document occur in Egypt from 1100–600 B.C., and the grammar and vocabulary employed fit the time from about 800–500 B.C. Hence, a study of the handwriting, personal names, grammar, and vocabulary shows that these four criteria used for dating Amenemope's work overlap between 800 and 600 B.C. This leads to the conclusion that the proverbs of Amenemope originated during that period, and that they are at least 150 years younger than those of Solomon.

Only scholars who do not accept the Solomonic authorship of the Biblical book of Proverbs, holding that it originated several centuries after Solomon's time, can argue for a priority of Amenemope. Students of the Bible, however, who accept the Solomonic authorship of Proverbs explain the parallels between this book and that of Amenemope by assuming that some of Solomon's proverbs found their way to Egypt, and were used by Amenemope in his collection of proverbs, where they are now found in an Egyptian garb.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 AH 404; 4T 588, 656; 5T 595
- 2 DA 403
- 6 AH 184, 205, 235, 264, 317; CG 38, 39; CT 108, 143, 161; FE 57; ML 261; 3T 131; 4T 429; 5T 320, 424
- 7 AH 391; Ed 136
- 11 Ed 237; MB 44
- 15 CG 87
- 16 Ed 136
- 17–19MH 447
- 20, 21 MH 448
- 26 1T 200
- 29 AH 391; Ed 135; FE 199; ML 104; 4T 459; 5T 178

## CHAPTER 23

**1. What is before thee.** Or, “who is before thee.” This is good advice to one unaccustomed to the rich supplies of a ruler’s table. Tempted to indulge his appetite, or thirst, a man might display gluttony or lose control of his tongue and spoil his opportunity for further service.

**2. To thy throat.** There is no thought of suicide in this advice, but rather an expression of the need to kill the greed.

**3. Deceitful meat.** There may be nothing wrong with the food, but often the purpose of such hospitality is to promote some selfish scheme and achieve some sinister end—perhaps to make the guest forget caution and talk freely. However attractive the dainties, either stay away or keep your mind on business and not pleasure (see v. 6; ch. 24:1).

**4. Labour not.** This is no eulogy of the slackness that leads to poverty, rather is it a warning against making selfish gain, instead of service, the goal. Worldly wisdom admonishes a man to look out for himself and to gather all the wealth he can as fast as he can. Such advice speaks of early retirement and the enjoyment of leisure, as if work were a curse instead of a blessing. In practice, those who permit the love of money to be the chief motivating force usually find that they are unable to relax even when what they first thought to be ample funds have been accumulated.

**5. They fly away.** Riches are uncertain. Wars and depressions have abundantly demonstrated that. The first clause suggests that when a man’s eyes alight upon his riches, suddenly they are gone (see Prov. 16:16; John 6:27).

**6. An evil eye.** The eye that cannot look upon the things of another without covetousness or jealous hatred. The warning against partaking of the hospitality of such men is, no doubt, based in part upon the fact that they look for a return from everything they give (see Deut. 15:9). In contrast, there are those who look upon others with “a bountiful,” or “good,” eye (Prov. 22:9; cf. Phil. 2:4).

**7. As he thinketh.** The particular application of this clause is to the covetous man who carries out the forms of friendly entertainment and plays the genial host, interested in the welfare of his guest, while his mind is casting about for some way to defraud him. There is a general application to all men. Since the issues of life spring from the heart (ch. 4:23), and a man is defiled by what comes out of him rather than by what goes in (Matt. 15:18–20), it follows that a man is as he thinks.

**8. Lose thy sweet words.** There is probably a tinge of irony in this clause. The context supports the thought that you owe your host no pleasant words of thanks, since you have gained no real benefit, and he has given no genuine hospitality. Hence your friendly words are lost upon the covetous host.

**9. Speak not.** That is, do not try to make the fool hear and understand wisdom. His heavy mind is so set on his own foolish way that your words are lost (see ch. 1:22). All you are likely to gain is his resentment.

**10. Landmark.** See on ch. 22:28.

**11. Redeemer.** Heb. *goʿel*, the only occurrence of this word in Proverbs. *Goʿel* at times designates a near kinsman, whose responsibility it is to avenge bloodshed and to see to the welfare of those in the family who are in need (Lev. 25:25, 47–49; Num. 35:9–29). Upon the *goʿel* rested the obligation to marry a related widow in order to perpetuate the line of the deceased husband (see on Ruth 2:20; cf. Ruth 4:1–10). In the text before us God represents Himself as the *goʿel* of the needy. He will take up the case of the oppressed and will avenge the

innocent (Prov. 22:23).

**12. Apply thine heart.** This clause seems to mark the beginning of a new series of proverbs. Some consider v. 11 the end of the section of advice, sent to one afar, which began with ch. 22:17 (see on ch. 22:17, 21).

**13. Withhold not correction.** One of the weaknesses of men is the tendency to postpone correction of a child's wrong habits until these habits have become troublesome to the parent. In their early stages these forms of behavior are often laughed at and commented on in the hearing of the child. Thus the time when they might be easily corrected goes by and the main outline of a warped character is formed (see chs. 13:24; 19:18).

**14. Deliver his soul.** Save his life by inculcating those good habits of obedience that make for longevity (Ex. 20:12). "Hell," Heb. *she'Ol*, is here representative of death.

**15. Shall rejoice.** The instructor of youth has many sad and trying hours as he seeks to train children, but there is rich reward in seeing the successful outcome in wise and kindly men.

**16. My reins.** Literally, "my kidneys," regarded as a center of feeling and of the inner man (Ps. 16:7; 73:21; Rev. 2:23). The tutor can judge the success of his work by the way the pupil responds.

**17. Envy sinners.** Servants of God are sometimes tempted to envy sinners, because these evildoers seem to prosper and to live a happy and carefree life (see Ps. 37:1; 73:3, 17; Prov. 3:31; 24:1, 19).

**18. An end.** Heb. *Óacharith*, literally, "an aftertime," translated "reward" (ch. 24:14). However well the wicked may fare in this life, and however much the righteous may suffer, the aftertime will correct the situation. The hope of the sinner in this world will fail, and the expectation of the righteous will surely come to pass.

**19. Guide thine heart.** Despite all that may have been written to the contrary by secular students of the human mind, it is still a positive duty to control the emotions and desires that spring up within the mind (Rom. 12:3). Right thinking leads to right acting (see Prov. 23:7).

**20. Riotous eaters of flesh.** Literally, "riotous eaters of flesh for themselves." Some have interpreted the phrase "flesh for themselves" as meaning "their own flesh," thus implying that those who revel in high living are ruining their own bodies and in this sense eating their own flesh. However, the parallelism implies that literal feasting is the subject under consideration.

**21. Come to poverty.** There are at least two reasons for this. Drunkenness and gluttony are costly vices that refuse to be controlled by a shortage of money. They also handicap a man in his work and limit his earning capacity (see ch. 24:33, 34).

**23. Buy the truth.** Truth is a treasure to be gained at any cost and never to be relinquished, whatever the temptation. The ability to see clearly the application of principle to daily happenings requires diligent application and a willingness to admit error. The closer a man comes to his Saviour, and the more he studies the Word of God, the more his eyes are opened to the real nature of things. If self-serving creeps in and the eyes are closed to facts in order that some temporal advantage may be gained, the truth is being sold and the man is in danger. If the process of self-deception continues, there comes a time when all understanding of the value of truth is lost and the man is doomed. Few realize how dangerous are the little self-deceptions in which they indulge, or for what petty price they sell truth and eternal life.

**25. She that bare.** The original curse of sin fell heavily upon the mother (Gen. 3:16). When sin entered, it became certain that many of the sons of men would fail to find the way of salvation and would perish. Each mother brings forth her children with this dreadful fate as a possibility. It is this common sorrow of womankind that makes keen the mother's joy when her child chooses



to walk in the way of eternal life.

**26. Give me thine heart.** It seems that Wisdom herself begins to speak as Solomon returns to the oft-repeated warning against unchastity (v. 27; cf. chs. 5:3; 6:24; 7:5).

**29. Who hath woe?** Here begins an ode on the subject of drunkenness. The poetic diction and imagery makes it a strikingly vivid picture of one of the greatest causes of sin and sorrow that Satan has stimulated men to invent.

The first two exclamations may be translated literally, “Who hath Oh!? Who hath Alas!?” Hence the song begins with the groans of the drinker who has awakened to a painful reaction from a night of indulgence.

**Contentions.** Quarrels frequently arise in one of the later stages of drunkenness. Men will fight with their best friends. Though abilities are reduced by liquor, many are still well able to inflict physical harm as well as incalculable psychological damage upon the innocent and helpless members of their families when they return home after a round of drinking.

**Babbling.** Heb. *sSiach*, perhaps better, “complaint” as in Job 7:13; 9:27; 10:1; still better, “concern,” “despair,” rather than the foolish talk that marks the more genial part of the drinking bout, which the translation, “babbling,” implies. *Sziach* may refer to the remorse most victims of the craving for alcohol feel when they awake to a realization of their behavior.

**Wounds without cause.** That is, they are entirely unnecessary. These are suffered both by the drinkers and by their families.

**Redness of eyes.** Literally, “darkness of eyes.” The bloodshot eyes peering dimly at the world are part of the recovery phase.

**30. Seek mixed wine.** Those who tarry long at the wine are the ones who suffer the afflictions listed in the previous verse. The longer men drink, the stronger the wine they crave, until they take to mixed wine. This is thought to be not the relatively mild drink prepared by mixing wine with water, but rather wine to which have been added spices and drugs calculated to increase its intoxicating power.

**31. Giveth his colour.** The Hebrew has, “gives its eye.” This is a warning against being allured by the undeniably attractive appearance of red wine sparkling with the gaseous products of fermentation until it comes to have something of the fascination of an eye.

**Moveth itself aright.** Literally, “it goeth straight,” which some interpret to mean “it goeth down smoothly.” If intoxicating liquor entailed exertion in its imbibing, it is probable that fewer would be deceived by it into drinking enough to impair their judgment. Tradition has attempted to surround the drinking of wine with a measure of distinction and has linked it with important occasions in family and national history. Yet wine remains as cruel and deceptive in august surroundings as it does in the hovels of poverty-stricken drunkards.

**32. Adder.** Heb. *s\iphOoni*. Presumably a species of poisonous snake, but the exact identification is uncertain. The adder is probably a horned snake. Wine is well likened to the poison of a snake. Both produce disastrous effects on the body.

**33. Strange women.** Some have felt that the contrast of this verse demands that this phrase be translated “strange things.” It is true that drunkenness causes men to see fantastic sights, but the repeated references to strange women in this book (see chs. 2:16; 5:3, 20; 7:5; 22:14) and the well-known connection between immorality and drunkenness make it seem probable that “strange women” are here referred to.

**Perverse things.** Alcohol affects first the higher centers of the brain, where are seated judgment and discretion. The power of decision is slowed, and the difference between right and wrong is blurred. The drinker says things that he would never think of saying while sober and

laughs at the inanities of others as if they were the product of the choicest wit. But the intoxicated brain does not produce inanities alone; evil thoughts and plans spring up and are often carried out by men who would never approve such wickedness when in full possession of their faculties.

**34. *Midst of the sea.*** Literally, “heart of the sea.” The picture is often taken to be that of a man trying to sleep in a world that seems to be heaving and turning like a confused sea. Some have referred it to the drugged sleep that finally comes to the drinker. He sinks down into a coma not far removed from death, with every faculty drowned in alcohol, as inert and helpless as a lifeless body floating on the waves of the sea.

***Mast.*** Heb. *chibbel*, a word that occurs only here. Its meaning is uncertain. If it designates the mast or the cradle where the lookout sits, it vividly pictures the sickening dizziness of the drunken and the many dangers to which he is unconsciously exposed. The LXX translates the second clause, “and as a pilot in a great storm.” This translation points to the impaired judgment of the intoxicated.

**35. *I was not sick.*** The drunkard may be speaking to himself, or he may be replying to the chiding of a friend. He admits the quarrels, but claims that he suffered no harm. He is dimly aware of the disabilities he has suffered in the impairment of his faculties, yet he longs for the time when he will have recovered enough from his irresistible drowsiness so that he can start the process all over again. Truly such a man is the slave of the master he has chosen (see Rom. 6:16), but God is able to release him from that servitude (see Rom. 6:18; 7:23–25).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 2 CH 67, 108

3 CH 111

4 PP 168

4, 5 Ed 140

5 CS 84; 3T 549

7 Ed 149; MB 94; MH 491; ML 85; MYP 144; PP 460; TM 408

10, 11 Ed 136

21 AH 391; Ed 135

26 AA 566; AH 43, 223, 297, 497; GW 209; ML 7, 160; MYP 333, 408, 410; TM 419; 4T 596

29, 30 Te 276

29–32MH 330; Te 31, 52, 93

31 CD 235

31, 32 Te 94, 165, 277

35 MH 330

## CHAPTER 24

**1. *To be with them.*** There is an excitement about the activities of those without scruples that has a strong attraction for young people who mistakenly think that goodness is dull (see Ps. 1:1; Prov. 4:14–19).

**2. *Studieth destruction.*** Friendship with evil men is dangerous for at least three reasons: (1) There is a danger that high moral resolves will wither under the scorn of the evildoers and the attractions of a life free from restraint; (2) reputation suffers from association with bad companions; (3) evildoers are likely to devise evil against the comparatively innocent lookers-on.

**3. *Through wisdom.*** Nothing solid is built up by the foolishness of envying men of

wickedness (v. 1). Only by the true wisdom that fears God and keeps His commandments can a family be blessed and protected. Robbery is no way to gain permanent wealth. Knowledge wisely used ensures a life of real pleasure.

**5. A wise man is strong.** The LXX renders the first clause, “A wise man is better than a strong man.” The translation of the KJV may be taken to teach that since a wise man in Solomon’s view is one who fears God, he has on his side not only the considerable might of wisdom but the added might of right.

**6. Multitude of counsellors.** See on ch. 11:14.

**7. Wisdom is too high.** The fool finds wisdom above his head. His actions are not dictated by reason but by desire. When wise men gather in the gate of the city (see on ch. 22:22) to discuss public matters, he has nothing to contribute. The considerations that guide men of understanding are beyond his intelligence, and he has no desire to increase his wisdom so that these considerations will become intelligible, because he has no intention of becoming good (see Ps. 10:4, 5).

**8. Mischievous person.** The misapplied ingenuity that the reprobate exhibits in planning and executing his nefarious schemes cannot be classed with wisdom or understanding. However skillful he may show himself to be, the most that will be said of him is that he is a “mischievous person,” literally, “lord of mischief.” The cleverest rogue is still to be classed with the fool, since he seeks that which can never give him lasting satisfaction or ultimate gain (see chs. 1:10–19; 12:2).

**9. Thought.** Heb. *zimmah*, “plan,” “device,” “wickedness.” Only here is *zimmah* translated “thought.” Elsewhere it is rendered “wickedness” (Lev. 18:17; etc.), “mischief” (Ps. 26:10; etc.), “wicked devices” (Isa. 32:7), “lewdness” (Jer. 13:27; etc.). Evidently it is not the thinking about foolishness that is here pointed out as sin, but rather the planning of the sort of folly mentioned in Prov. 24:8.

**Scorner.** Men may hesitate to describe as a fool the shrewd and subtle scoffer, who can undermine a truth while pretending to defend it, but they hate and fear him because his attacks are so insidious (see Prov. 19:29; 21:11; Isa. 29:20).

**10. If thou faint.** Literally, “if thou show thyself slack.” When trouble comes, a man must rally all his forces to the battle. To fail to respond to the emergency, to meet it weak and unready, is to reduce one’s strength and to invite defeat.

**11. If thou forbear.** There is no Hebrew word for “if” at the beginning of this verse. The second clause contains such a word, which should perhaps be read as an exclamation. These observations permit the translation, “Deliver them that are drawn away to death and those who are tottering to slaughter, oh, hold them back!” The LXX has, instead of the exclamation, a negative, “Deliver them that are led away to death, and redeem them that are appointed to be slain; spare not [thy help].” Verse 12 suggests that there is a duty upon the servant of God to do all he can to deliver those who are being haled away to execution, the implication being that they have been unjustly condemned. Our attitude toward the licensing of the traffic in liquor and other soul-destroying forms of commerce should be governed by this wise counsel (see MH 345, 346). We should do all in our power to hold back the victims from their self-destroying habit and use every lawful means to prevent the traders in drink from profiting by the destruction of others.

**12. We knew it not.** Excuses are useless in dealing with God. Human beings cannot know our inner thoughts and feelings, and hence cannot know the degree to which we are aware of our duty to help others; but the Creator of the heart knows (see chs. 16:2; 21:2). He who watches the development of character within us is well aware of the precise degree of guilt which attaches to every act (see Jer. 17:9, 10). In this appraisal every circumstance is weighed, every part of our

inheritance and environment is allowed for. Guilt accrues for unrepented neglect as verily as for unrepented and deliberate sin (see GC 487, 488). For the sins of others that we might have prevented by pointing transgressors to the Saviour, we must suffer condemnation (see DA 641).

**13. Eat thou honey.** Solomon is here not primarily giving dietetic counsel. The statement is preliminary to, and is used as an illustrative background for, counsel concerning wise behavior. The statement should be compared with ch. 25:16, 27.

**14. Knowledge of wisdom.** As honey is pleasant to the taste and good for the strengthening of the body, so is wisdom to the soul or character. Wisdom is sweet in itself to those who learn to appreciate it, and the results in this life and the next are sweeter yet. If wisdom is found and assimilated, then when the future time of rewards comes, the wise and righteous man will not fail of his reward.

**15. Lay not wait.** The wicked man is usually envious of the good man who enjoys the protection of the Lord. He often possesses a sinister desire to lead the righteous into sin so that they may be in as precarious a state as he himself. Further, the greedy man often seeks to deprive the innocent of their homes in order to gain an unjust profit. Those who prey upon the just are careless of the sorrow they cause or even take pleasure in it (see Prov. 1:11, 12; 4:16; Amos 8:5, 6).

**16. Falleth seven times.** The context suggests that the primary meaning of “fall” here is “to suffer some calamity.” The wicked man wastes his efforts to overthrow the righteous. As often as he brings them into poverty and woe, God intervenes to save them, whereas the sinner is literally “overthrown by calamity” and cannot rise up again (see Ps. 34:19; Micah 7:8). In the spiritual sense this verse has much comfort for the struggling Christian who is discouraged by his failure in his struggles against sin. “Falleth seven times” is equivalent to saying, “whenever he falls.” If we rise up in fresh hope after each failure, if we lay hold again upon the saving strength so freely offered to us (Matt. 11:28; Jude 24), then we are classed as just men, and the Lord will complete in us the work that He has begun (Phil. 1:6; Heb. 12:2). The desire to become righteous and the strength to carry out the desire both come from Him (Phil. 2:13). Hence none need ever despair, however weak he may think himself to be, as long as he is willing to be made willing to do the right (MB 204, 205).

**17. Rejoice not.** A sentiment similar to that expressed by Jesus when He said, “Love your enemies, ... do good to them that hate you” (Matt. 5:44). It is human nature to rejoice when an enemy falls into trouble. We may attempt to disguise our sinful satisfaction at his woe by professing to feel a righteous pleasure that justice has been done; but our inmost feelings are contrary to the example and teaching of Jesus, who died for a world of enemies (Rom. 5:8–10). We must show a love for lost humanity that seeks to save, not to destroy, and that grieves at the fate of those who go contrary to right (see Eze. 33:11; Hosea 11:8; Luke 19:41, 42; DA 575, 576).

These foreshadowings of the more complete revelation of heavenly love help to demonstrate that it was the Spirit of Christ that spoke through the prophets of old (1 Peter 1:11).

**18. His wrath.** At first this may seem to be a selfish reason for an unselfish attitude. To pity a man in trouble just because the Lord may remove the trouble from him in displeasure at your selfish attitude, and perhaps place it upon you instead, seems an appeal to hypocrisy and egotism. One who has been completely filled with the self-sacrificing love of Christ will be glad to come into calamity and even under the displeasure of God if a sinner were thereby to be saved from wrath. Christ did it (Isa. 53), and Moses was ready to (Ex. 32:31–33). But Solomon’s warning is not to a good man who loves his enemies; it is for the evil man who rejoices in another’s sorrow. For such a person the reason given is a very valid one. True mercy cannot be constrained. It flows

freely from the heart of love to all in need.

**19. Fret not thyself.** As we should not rejoice when an enemy falls (v. 17), so we are warned not to be enraged at, or jealous of, his prosperity (see Ps. 37:1, 8; 73:2, 3; Prov. 24:1). Such an attitude may lead us to discouragement, perhaps even to the point of following in the path of the wicked in order to enjoy the pleasures he apparently enjoys. The protection against such feelings is found in Prov. 24:20.

**20. No reward.** Compare Ps. 73:3, 17–24.

**21. Given to change.** Not only must we honor God and the civil ruler (see Eccl. 8:2; 10:20; 1 Peter 2:17); we should be careful to avoid the company of those who are otherwise-minded.

**22. Of them both.** Since “both” seems clearly to refer to God and the king, the expression must describe the ruin they inflict upon those who rebel against them. Such ruin may come suddenly, unexpectedly, and with crushing force. Good men are well advised to keep from being caught up in it through friendship with the enemies of these two great powers.

**23. These things also.** These words appear to be the introduction to an addition, a kind of postscript binding off the section.

**Respect of persons.** See on chs. 18:5; 24:24.

**24. Thou art righteous.** Judges who acquit the guilty one are not popular with the people who have been harmed by him. But when these judges praise the wicked man as being good, they do more than release a criminal to continue his war on society. They becloud all ideas of good and bad and encourage the youth to grow up without respect for law and order. Such magistrates earn the hatred of whole nations, for respect for justice is generally strong among the populace as a whole. Citizens of a state resent actions that weaken the foundations of their peace and prosperity.

**25. Shall be delight.** Those who justly condemn and punish the evildoer will enjoy a sense of duty done. There is great satisfaction in doing right. There is still more in being able to help the masses both by protecting them from their enemies and by building up in their minds respect for authority. Good rulers receive a special blessing. Not only are they beloved by their subjects, but the Lord Himself rewards them by His special protection and guidance (see Ps. 72). For the subjects of such rulers there is also a blessing. They can rest secure, knowing that they will be given justice when the necessity arises.

**26. Kiss his lips.** This verse reads literally, “He will kiss the lips who returns a right answer.” When a king, ruler, or judge speaks just words they are as pleasant to right-thinking people as a kiss.

**27. Build thine house.** The building of the house may be intended literally, or it may refer to the founding of a family and the raising up of sons and daughters. Before a young man could hope to win a wife from her parents he had to be in a position to give them and her substantial presents and demonstrate his ability to support her (see Gen. 24:35, 53). And in order to do this he would need to establish himself by cultivating a farm capable of supporting the needs of a family.

Spiritually, too, a man should clear his heart of stones and weeds and plant the seeds of righteous living therein before he hopes to build up within himself a strong and abiding character (see Isa. 5:1–7; Hosea 10:12).

**28. Without cause.** This may mean that no one should volunteer information against his neighbor, but he should wait until he is asked to bear witness. However, the context suggests that the meaning is rather that a man should not say things against his neighbor that are without foundation in truth (see ch. 3:30). The second clause is literally a question, “Will you deceive

with your lips?”

**29. I will do so.** Solomon warns against a man’s adopting the reverse of the golden rule. Even though an enemy has testified falsely against us, we are not to do so to him. Whatever evil he may have done us, we are not to pay him back in his own coin. Recompense belongs to God (Heb. 10:30).

The idea of taking vengeance on an enemy is epitomized in the old saying, “I will get even with him!” Our opponent has lowered himself to treat us in an evil way, and we are waiting our time to lower ourselves to his level. If he then lowers himself more to attack us again, we again lower ourselves to his level to hit back. That process may go on for a long time, but no one gains by it except the great adversary of mankind.

**30. The field.** The field and the vineyard were the two main sources of food and profit for the Palestinian farmer. This verse parallels the slothful man with the man who lacks sense.

**31. Thorns.** A number of Hebrew words are rendered “thorns,” and it is not easy to know which of the many troublesome and weedlike growths is meant in any particular case. A neglected field is quickly overgrown with vegetation that chokes the crops and that is difficult to eradicate once the weeds have been permitted to spread. The wall too must be kept in good repair if the farm is to be protected against marauding animals (see Isa. 5:1–7).

Some have seen in Solomon’s poem about the sluggard an illustration of a spiritual truth. While the Holy Spirit alone can enable us to overcome sin (DA 671), He can do nothing for us without our consent and cooperation (MB 204). We must go forward in the strength that the Spirit of God imparts, to eradicate the weeds (MH 176; 3T 491). We must also proceed, in the strength of God, to build up a strong wall of obedience to the Ten Commandments (see CT 454).

**32. I saw.** Solomon took note of the condition of the lazy man’s farm and saw the spiritual application as well as the direct lesson for all who lack initiative and vigor. It was this ability to observe the passing scene and learn lessons from what he saw, together with the special blessing of God, that made Solomon one of the wisest men who ever lived. All who wish to be wise may gain wisdom as Solomon gained it (see 1 Kings 4:29; James 1:5; PK 31).

**33. Sleep.** Compare chs. 6:10, 11; 20:13.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

5 ML 117

6 1T 225; 2T 357

9 4T 320

10 5T 304

11, 12 DA 641; MH 346; 8T 29

12 3T 444

17 MB 109

20 CT 344

29 MB 109

30–34 5T 181

## CHAPTER 25

1 *Observations about kings, 8 and about avoiding causes of quarrels, and sundry causes thereof.*

**1. Copied out.** Literally, “removed,” or, according to the later technical meaning of the word, “transcribed.” These proverbs were evidently copied either from other writings or from

collections or some, perhaps, from oral sources—people who had been taught these sayings of Solomon. Among those who helped in this task may have been Isaiah the prophet, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the chronicler (2 Kings 18:18; cf. 2 Chron. 26:22).

**2. Glory.** It is a glory for God to be infinite and therefore to conceal much from the finite and sin-darkened minds of men (Deut. 29:29). The mysteries of the Bible, which are now beyond our full comprehension, are proofs that it is indeed the word of God.

**Honour.** Heb. *kabod*. Better, “glory,” as *kabod* is translated in the first clause.

**Search out a matter.** A ruler must satisfy his subjects that he is concerned that the humblest receive the justice to which they are entitled. It is his glory to convince the people that he has searched out the full details of notorious cases and settled them in strict equity.

**3. The heaven.** The height of the atmospheric heavens can be fairly well established. The height of the stellar heaven is unknown. New and larger telescopes that penetrate vast distances disclose no limits to the starry heavens. Thus the heaven is unsearchable for height. Each new discovery reveals still higher heights to be searched out.

**The earth.** As men have been unable to journey far into outer space, so their burrowings into the earth have been restricted to mere surface tunnelings. Probing with sound waves and studying earthquake shocks have yielded valuable information, but the actual knowledge of the substance of the heart of the earth remains much as it was in the days of Solomon.

**Unsearchable.** As the heavens are unsearchable for height and the earth for depth, so likewise are the hearts of kings impenetrable to their fellow men. Even those human beings who are closest to one another do not really know what is going on in each other’s mind; still less can a subject fathom the mind of the king. Even a courtier who thinks he is able to keep the king’s favor by flattery never knows when he may find that another has taken his place.

**4. Finer.** The “smelter,” “refiner,” or “smith.” On the removal of extraneous matter see Ps. 12:6; Eze. 22:20; Mal. 3:3.

**5. Take away the wicked.** As the removal of the dross from the silver beautifies and strengthens the metal, so the removal of wicked men, who flatter the king into evil ways, from the court of the king, adds to the nobility and endurance of the kingdom. The ruler himself should take the responsibility of detecting and removing unsuitable men from office. Such purgings augur well for the prosperity of the king’s reign and the happiness of the people.

**6. Put not forth.** Compare Luke 14:7–11.

**7. Come up hither.** Haman sought to make himself powerful in the Persian court. He was quick to ask for royal honors when he thought he was the one to be honored (Esther 6:6–11). Yet he received only the mortification of being required to honor one whom he hated, one who had held back from seeking honor for himself, but who was called up higher by the king as a result of faithful service. Deep chagrin seizes those who have thrust themselves forward into high places in the court and are publicly set back in favor of another (see Luke 14:7–11).

**8. Hastily to strive.** A warning against litigation without careful consideration, since right does not necessarily guarantee the victory in a court of law, and also because no man is a perfect judge of his own matter.

**9. Thy neighbour himself.** Compare Matt. 18:15. The first step in any quarrel or disagreement is to go quietly to the other person and discuss the matter with him. Even if he seems definitely to be much more in the wrong, there is almost always some element of fault on your side. A confession of this minor error will often bring about a confession of his greater culpability and a consequent reconciliation. To follow the more usual course of telling everyone else the story before attempting to see the other man is to make it almost impossible to secure peace.

**10. Put thee to shame.** Others will reproach you when they discover your treachery. The LXX has an interesting addition to this verse: “but shall be to thee like death. Favour and friendship set a man free, which do thou keep for thyself, lest thou be made liable to reproach; but take heed to thy ways peaceably.”

**11. Fitly spoken.** A word spoken in the right manner and at the right time is the essence of tactfulness and has a beauty which is likened to golden fruit in a silver setting.

**12. Earring.** Heb. *nezem*, a ring, either of the nose (see Isa. 3:21; see on Gen. 24:22) or of the ear (Ex. 32:2, 3). The ornaments here described may have represented earrings matched with a golden pendant worn around the neck. To Solomon, with his large and costly household, jewelry was abundant and considered of great value. The obedient ear accepts the counsel of a wise reprover and, as it were, wears the advice as a jewel setting off to advantage the beauty of a good character.

**13. The cold of snow.** The reference is obviously not to a snowfall in harvest, for such a fall would have been very unwelcome (ch. 26:1) and probably disastrous to the crops. The “cold of snow” is the snow-cooled drink, a most welcome refreshment in the heavy heat of harvest days. Before the days of mechanical refrigeration, the use of snow or ice to cool and preserve was a privilege enjoyed by the wealthy in every land where snow could be obtained.

**Faithful messenger.** Compare chs. 10:26; 13:17. In these days of rapid communication by electricity, it is difficult to realize how dependent even mighty kings were upon their ambassadors and envoys. Once dispatched, the messenger had entire control of the handling of the mission, which might take him months to accomplish.

**14. Without rain.** Clouds and wind frequently portend rain (see 1 Kings 18:45). When the clouds bring no rain in a time when moisture is sorely needed, people feel cheated. Men react similarly when they have been promised a gift and the promise is not kept. There are some who seem continually to arouse expectations that they will do great things for their friends and acquaintances; yet they seldom or never carry out the implied promises. The consequences of such actions may be much greater than the mere loss of the promised gift. When faith in mankind is weakened, the whole character may be adversely affected, and even faith in God diminished.

**15. By long forbearing.** Calm, patient persistence, which continues to marshal facts and arguments in the face of opposition, may well succeed in changing the mind of a prince or judge. One who becomes heated and angry when his statement of the case is not immediately accepted is greatly handicapped. It is the studied aim of some lawyers to make their opponents angry while they themselves appear to remain calm, for they know that the judge will be greatly influenced by these contrasting attitudes.

**Breaketh the bone.** The gentle, persuasive ways of a soft tongue will accomplish all that force can do, and more besides. The stubborn opposition that only becomes more stubborn under direct attack will often melt like ice in the sun when exposed to tender, conciliatory words spoken in gentle, winning tones.

**16. Hast thou found honey?** Compare chs. 24:13; 25:27. This verse is not primarily dietetic counsel, but a dietetic principle illustrating the maxim of Prov. 25:17. To have too much, even of a good thing, is to turn the good into an evil. Even spiritual instruction can become a surfeit, if those who continually seek to receive do not balance their receiving by imparting to others.

**17. Withdraw thy foot.** The first clause reads literally, “Make your foot precious [that is, rare] in the house of your friend.” In the scale of fallible human values, that which is rare is precious and that which is plentiful, of relatively less value. It is easy to wear out one’s welcome by being too frequent a visitor. Familiarity often breeds contempt except where the close ties of



family relationship bind hearts ever closer together. Without such close mutual love, constant association on a social level, after the element of novelty has gone, tends to reveal weaknesses and breed a weariness that may easily turn to dislike.

**18. A maul.** The three types of weapons represent the effects of false witness upon the friend so vilified. The maul was a war club that crushed in the heads or smashed the bones and bruised the flesh of its victims. Some attacks made upon a man's reputation are crude and simply crush the sufferer down in ruin. Others inflict deep cuts with sharp words which incapacitate and often destroy as does a sword. But one of the favorite weapons of the maligner of his fellow men is the arrow. Sped from a distance, it pierces the heart and saps the will to struggle against the covert enmity of the archer, who often disguises himself as a friend. Such attacks break the sixth commandment as well as the ninth (Ex. 20:13, 16; see PP 308).

**19. Broken tooth.** Two vivid illustrations that point up the danger of relying upon a faithless friend in time of stress. A man cannot always get a weak or dislocated foot or a broken tooth made fit for use immediately, but he can easily cease to trust in a friend whose reliability he has good reason to doubt (see Isa. 36:6).

**20. Taketh away.** The removal here referred to is not that of a garment from another, but the laying aside of one's own. It is foolish to lay off warm clothes on a cold day and thus invite sickness.

**Nitre.** Here, not saltpeter (potassium or sodium nitrate), but an alkali known as natron, which is largely composed of carbonate of soda and which was used for washing (Jer. 2:22). It is both foolish and wasteful to pour vinegar upon natron, for the two chemicals react on each other and leave both the vinegar and the natron changed into a salt that is useless for the duties of either. For "nitre" the LXX reads, "a sore," or "wound." To obtain this reading in the Hebrew requires the change of only one consonant so as to read *neteq* instead of *neter*.

As foolish and as liable to produce ill effects as the removing of clothes, as wasteful and productive of an angry outburst as the mixing of an acid with soda, so is the singing of merry songs to one whose heart is heavy. The wise and tactful have always known instinctively that it was foolish to joke with the anxious, and to exhort them to pull themselves together and throw off their sorrow without doing anything to alter the circumstances that produced the trouble.

**21. If thine enemy.** Compare 2 Kings 6:19–23; Prov. 24:17, 18; Matt. 5:44.

**22. Heap coals of fire.** There has been much difference of opinion as to the meaning of this metaphor. Some have felt that the coals of fire represent the burning shame and remorse with which the enemy is covered and that this was a form of vengeance gained by the innocent party. But one cannot very well conceive of God rewarding the taking of vengeance. He has claimed that vengeance belongs to Him (Heb. 10:30), and has bidden us to love our enemies and suffer whatever they may do to us (Matt. 5:44; James 5:6–8). Whatever the precise meaning, the metaphor seems most probably to represent an attempt to do good to the foe, even though such an action may give him further opportunity to sin against us.

Our material kindness to an enemy, by seeking him out when he should really come to us for reconciliation, may bring upon his head fires of repentance and sorrow for sin that will burn up all the ill will and make us good friends and fellow servants of the Lord.

**23. Driveth away.** Heb. *chil*, "to whirl," "to dance," "to writhe." In the form here used *chil* may mean "to bring forth." It is used in Isa. 51:2 of Sarah's bringing forth the people of Israel, and in Ps. 90:2 of God's producing the earth. Hence the first clause may be given a completely opposite rendering, "the north wind bringeth forth rain." Though fair weather in Palestine came out of the north (Job 37:22), it is also true that the northwest wind produced rain.

If the KJV translation is taken, the second clause means that an angry look conveys enough of a threat of retaliation to silence the slanderer. The more probable translation suggests that an angry face may drive one to begin to talk, literally, with a “concealed tongue.” Or the elements of the second clause may be inverted so as to make the slander produce the anger.

**24. Brawling woman.** Compare ch. 21:9.

**25. Good news.** In the days of poor communications, little could be heard from one who left home and traveled in a far country. News brought by some returning traveler would be the only way of knowing that the absent one was still alive and prospering in his mission.

As the good news from a far country cheered the heart of the recipient, so in a spiritual sense the good news of heaven that has been brought to us by the prophets refreshes us on our march through a dreary world. Through them—

“We have heard from the bright, the holy,  
land;

We have heard, and our hearts are glad.”

**26. A troubled fountain.** The righteous man should be a spring of water welling up to eternal life (Prov. 10:11; John 4:14); but when he fails to stand up for right and truth before unbelievers and opponents, he becomes a spring trampled by defiling feet until the water is muddied and spoiled. None will be attracted to drink from such a fountain, and they would find little refreshment from it if they were. With the promise of God’s presence for support at all times (Isa. 51:12; Matt. 28:20), it is a disgrace for a believer to lower his colors through moral cowardice.

**27. To search their own glory.** It is difficult to translate the Hebrew of this verse so as to preserve the antithesis characteristic of the majority of the proverbs. Translators and commentators have suggested various other translations in an endeavor to find a meaning close to the Hebrew that shows the customary contrast between the two clauses of the verse. The language of the first clause is clear enough and should be expected to set the stage for the second. Since the Hebrew word for “glory,” *kabod*, also means “honor,” many have rendered the clause, “contempt of their honor is honor”; but this does not fit the warning against excess in the first clause. Others prefer, “searching out honor brings difficulty,” or “searching out one’s honor is burdensome” from another meaning of *kabod*, namely, “weight.”

A translation that fits the context in its warning against excess is, “The searching out of weighty matters is a weight.” This would warn against excessive study. Honey is good, study is good, but to indulge in either to excess would be to turn a blessing into a burden (see Eccl. 12:12).

However, we cannot be sure that this is the intended meaning.

**28. No rule.** A city without walls is open to attack on all sides by any adversary (see Neh. 2:13); so a man who cannot retain control over his own emotions and desires is certain to succumb to temptations. Enticements to evil allure him from without; angry words and deeds break out from within.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

8, 9 GW 498; 7T 250

11 AH 434; CG 562; CSW 76; CT 443; Ev 477; FE 133; ML 190; SL 9; 1T 470; 3T 109, 247;  
4T 69, 310; WM 288

21, 22 MB 109

25 7T 50

28 Ed 236; MYP 135; 4T 368

## CHAPTER 26

1 *Observations about fools, 13 about sluggards, 17 and about contentious busybodies.*

**1. For a fool.** This verse begins a series of proverbs concerning the fool. In Palestine, snow in summer would be most unnatural. Rain in harvesttime would be most undesirable (see 1 Sam. 12:17). Honor for a fool would be equally unnatural and dangerous. To elevate to a place of honor a man lacking in understanding is to give him opportunities to do great harm and such a course discourages those who are truly worthy of such promotion.

**2. Causeless.** Or, “undeservedly.” A curse uttered by a malignant enemy need not disturb the innocent and upright, for they are under the protection of God and do not fear enchantments (Num. 23:23). Nor will God permit enemies, whether human or superhuman, to bring troubles upon His children beyond what they are able to bear (Job 1:9–12; 2:4–6; 1 Cor. 10:13).

**3. A rod.** A whip serves to spur on the horse and the mule and a bridle guides them in the right way and curbs unwise bursts of speed. The fool needs sharp correction if he is to be kept from harming himself and others by unwise actions (see chs. 10:13; 19:29).

**4. Answer not a fool.** This verse seems to contradict the one that follows, but Solomon is making a play upon the little word *ki*, here rendered “according to.” In this verse it means “in harmony with.” To enter into discussion with a fool within the terms of his folly is to lower oneself to his level and to accept his outlook upon life as one worthy of consideration. Those who asked Christ about the tribute money intended to entrap Him within the area of their own selfish thinking. If He had answered according to the obstinate folly of his enemies, they could have turned His answer against Him. But He refused to accept their premise. His answer was from a realm of true wisdom and left them silenced and shamed (Matt. 22:15–22).

**5. Answer a fool.** Here “according to” means “as it deserves” (see on v. 4). Answer the fool so that the foolishness of the proposition is revealed to those who listen and to the fool himself. Thus he may come to realize that he is far from wise and may seek to become so. In a sense, Christ carried out the advice in both of these apparently contradictory verses (vs. 4, 5) when He answered the Pharisees and the Herodians (Matt. 22:15–22; see on Prov. 26:4). Without entering into the area of their foolishness, He succeeded in showing up the malign foolishness of His questioners.

**6. Cutteth off.** A man who relies upon a fool to carry out important business is depriving himself of any hope of the accomplishment of his mission, and the damage that he suffers as a result of his messenger’s behavior is likely to be greater than if he had never attempted to send the message.

**7. Are not equal.** Apparently from the Hebrew root *dalah*, “to draw [water]” (see Ex. 2:19). But the meaning here is difficult. Some suggest that *dalah* should be rendered “hang loose,” or “hang down [helpless].” There was a form of deformity in the East in which the legs were thin, twisted, and utterly useless.

The repeating of parables was a favorite pastime in Palestine, and a man’s wisdom was often displayed in such storytelling contests. A fool would be likely to miss the point of the story or tell it in so lame a manner that it failed of its effect.

**8. Bindeth a stone.** To tie a stone into a sling so that the missile cannot fly off when one thong is released is not only to fail to accomplish the purpose in hitting the mark, but also to endanger one’s own safety, since the stone would be likely to fly round at the end of another thong and strike some part of the body.

**9. As a thorn goeth up.** This is the normal way to translate the Hebrew of this clause, but

the figure is obscure and the word for “goeth,” *Ôalah*, does not normally mean “to pierce.” It is possible, by a later usage of *Ôalah*, to translate the clause “as a thorn [or thornbush] comes into the hand of [that is, into the possession of] a drunkard.” The inebriate in possession of a thorny staff or even a thornbush would be armed and capable of doing great harm to others in his dull rage. Thus a parable told by a fool is both useless and dangerous.

**10. The great God.** There has been much controversy over the meaning of this verse. The Hebrew word for “great” may mean “archer” or possibly “arrow” (see Jer. 50:29) and that for “formed” may mean “wounded.” Hence the verse may be rendered, “An arrow which wounds everyone is he who hires a fool and he who hires passers-by.” The intended lesson seems to be that the employment of fools and incompetent people will endanger the employer as well as those he employs, even as a poisoned arrow endangers those who use it as well as those at whom it is shot.

**11. As a dog.** See 2 Peter 2:22.

**A fool returneth.** Because he is a fool, and as long as he remains a fool, he is bound to return to his foolish ways. Only a complete change of heart and outlook can cure him, however often he may profess an intention to be wiser.

**12. His own conceit.** A man who professes to be wise refuses to learn (see Matt. 9:12; Rom. 1:22; 12:16; Rev. 3:17, 18), but the man who recognizes his simplicity is willing to be taught understanding.

**13. A lion.** Compare ch. 22:13.

**14. The slothful.** His turning from side to side shows that he is not in need of the long hours of sleep. He turns to rise, and sinks back again out of sheer indolence and a distaste for facing the problems of life (see chs. 6:9; 24:33).

**15. Hideth his hand.** Compare ch. 19:24.

**16. His own conceit.** One reason why the sluggard is more sure of himself and his wisdom than all the men of understanding is that he is too lazy to think things out for himself. He is satisfied with preconceived opinions and adopts any view that comes to his ears as long as it suits his fancy. The kind of men who can “render a reason” have pondered problems long enough to be aware that there are several sides to many questions. They avoid the dogmatic ignorance of the unthinking.

**17. Meddleth with strife.** One who grasped one of the half-wild scavenger dogs of the East by the ears had a troublesome fight on his hands before he could subdue the dog or persuade it to go. Thus one who meddles in another’s quarrel is likely to get into more difficulty than he bargained for.

**18. As a mad man.** Verse 19 indicates that we are not dealing with a deliberate murderer. One who shoots arrows at random and launches burning darts so as to bring death to the innocent must be insane.

**19. Deceiveth.** As dangerous as the maniac (v. 18), and as deadly in his actions, is the man who plots against his neighbor’s welfare and, when discovered, alleges that he was only joking. Serious harm is often caused by those who find pleasure in seeing their friends in trouble as a result of foolish tricks.

**20. Goeth out.** When the fuel is all consumed, the fire must go out, and many quarrels would quickly cool off if talebearers did not keep adding fuel to the fire (see ch. 22:10).

**21. To kindle strife.** The cold, black charcoal placed upon a glowing fire stirs it up to renewed activity. The cold malice of the mischief-maker cannot bear to see a quarrel die down, so he invents new reasons for anger and hatred.

**22. Talebearer.** See on ch. 18:8.

**23. Silver dross.** Probably litharge, or lead monoxide, which forms a glaze upon the earthen vessel and makes the vessel smooth and pleasant to the touch while the materials beneath are rough and of little value. Kisses that simulate true affection may mask a wicked and designing heart (see Matt. 23:27). The mouth may speak warm words of friendship while the heart is cold and self-seeking.

**24. Dissembleth.** The man who hates may not reveal his feelings to the object of his hatred, but makes a pretense of friendship and thus permits a store of hidden hate to build up within him until an opportunity arises to put it into action (see Jer. 9:8).

**25. Speaketh fair.** When he speaks in a gentle, winning tone of voice, it is time to beware; for he has probably adopted a gracious manner only for the purpose of deceiving his hearer.

**Seven abominations.** Seven is the sign of completeness (see Matt. 12:45).

**26. Whose hatred.** Sooner or later the hatred is likely to break out in word or deed and the passionate one will be brought to trial before the assembly of the nation. In any case, the day of judgment will show to him and the whole assembled population of the earth that in hating his brother he has been guilty of murder and has also hated God (see 1 John 3:15; 4:20).

**27. Shall fall therein.** Compare Ps. 9:16; Eccl. 10:8. If the retribution does not come upon evil men in this life, as in the case of Haman (Esther 7:9, 10), it is certain to come on them at the final judgment (Rev. 22:12).

**28. Flattering mouth.** Flattery is dangerous, for it increases the pride of its victim and cuts him off from the help that Heaven longs to give. It causes him to trust the flatterer and thus to become an easy prey. Flattery diverts attention from points of character where improvement is needed.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 ED 146

12 CE 11; 4T 190

18, 19 Ed 236

27 Ed 136

## CHAPTER 27

1 *Observations of selflove, 5 of true love, 11 of care to avoid offences, 23 and of the household care.*

**1. Of to morrow.** Neither this verse nor the teaching of our Saviour against anxious thought (Matt. 6:34) is intended to make us careless of the future (see 2 Thess. 3:8–11). Rather these are a warning against an attitude of self-trust and self-assurance such as that of the foolish rich man who planned to build bigger barns instead of sharing his plenty with the poor (Luke 12:15–21; cf. James 4:13, 14). The calm trust in God that marks the Christian (Rom. 8:28; Phil. 4:11) enables him to face the future without fear, even though he can no more see what will happen on the morrow than can the unbeliever.

**2. Another man.** Compare John 8:54; 2 Cor. 10:18. This proverb finds a parallel in many lands.

**3. A stone is heavy.** The verse reads literally, “heaviness of stone, weight of sand, the vexation of a fool is heavier than both.” The dead weight of the stone and the smothering weight of the sand are emphasized to prepare the mind to appreciate the dragging weight of the bad

temper and unreasonable attacks of headstrong fools.

**4. Anger is outrageous.** Wrath and anger are sudden outbursts that soon pass away, but envy and jealousy are smoldering passions that wait through slow-working years for the opportunity to vent their soul-corroding hate upon an enemy (see Prov. 6:34; S. of Sol. 8:6). Envy was the first sin to intrude its mysterious presence into a sinless universe (Isa. 14:13, 14). Had it made its debut with a sudden outbreak of violence, the nature of the passion would immediately have been apparent to the angels, so that few would have turned from their allegiance to sympathize with so obvious an evil. But the dark scheming of persistent jealousy puzzled all the heavenly beings, and deceived many. God could successfully meet the sinister invasion only by the unhurried working out of righteousness and truth until the climax of both selfless love and jealous hate would bring into clear contrast the goodness of God and the cruel malignity of Satan (see PP 33–43; GC 492–504; DA 761, 762).

**5. Open rebuke.** While not pleasant (v. 6), the wise admonition of a friend is helpful when it is accepted in the right spirit, but love that is never demonstrated or expressed is of no help to its object. Love must act or it fades away.

**6. Faithful.** Heb. *ne'ōmanim*, from the root *ōaman*, “to support,” “to be firm,” “to be true and faithful.” The “amen” with which we conclude our prayers comes from this root. The kindly, well-meant rebuke of a friend (v. 5) is said to be of this character.

**7. Loatheth an honeycomb.** Nothing is appetizing to the satiated person; anything tastes good to the hungry.

**8. That wandereth.** Perhaps either wantonly or because it has been driven from its nest (see Isa. 16:2). A man should be content to stay at home and not seek more exciting pleasures elsewhere. The Hebrew has no distinct word for “home,” but for the general idea of “home” employs the word for “place” as here, or for “house” as in Gen. 39:16; 43:16; etc., or for “tent” as in Judges 19:9.

**10. A brother.** A tried friend is more likely to be of help in adversity than a brother who has not the same special interest as the good neighbor. The claims of friendship are often stronger than those of blood relationship, especially when the friends are united by a common religious hope not shared by the relatives (see chs. 17:17; 18:24).

**11. That I may answer.** Compare chs. 10:1; 23:15, 24. Whether it is as a father or as an instructor that Solomon is speaking, wisdom displayed by the son or pupil will be the best answer to critics of the tutor’s efficiency.

**12. A prudent man foreseeeth.** See on ch. 22:3.

**13. That is surety.** See on ch. 20:16.

**14. Counted a curse.** The loud-voiced greeting of one who has risen early to be first with his flattery is not genuine but is merely a means for securing some advantage. Such greetings should put a man on guard the same as if he had been threatened (see Luke 6:26; Gal. 1:10).

**15. Contentious woman.** Compare ch. 19:13.

**16. Which bewrayeth itself.** From the Heb. *qara'ō*, “to call,” or “to meet.” Hence the second clause may literally be translated, “His right hand calls oil,” or, “His right hand meets oil.” One rendering that has been offered for this obscure verse is: “A bad-tempered woman can no more be restrained than the wind, she slips through the grasping hand like oil and continues her contentious way in spite of all efforts to prevent her.”

**17. Sharpeneth.** The sharpening has been variously interpreted. Some have felt it could mean only to make the friend angry so that he gives “sharp” looks; but most have taken it in the good sense of increasing a friend’s wisdom and initiative by mutual help and rivalry as the iron of

the file or of the hammer sharpens the iron of the blade.

**18. Eat the fruit thereof.** A fig tree may be made to produce an abundance of fruit, and he who cares for it should have the first opportunity to enjoy the bounty (2 Tim. 2:6). A good servant will be rewarded by his master with honor as well as the payment of wages (Matt. 25:21). This proverb may also point to the security enjoyed by the man who produces most of what he eats and wears. Such a man is comparatively unaffected by rising and falling prices or scarcity caused by strikes or manipulations of the market. For the labor and care that he bestows upon his crops he receives a direct reward (see MH 188–193).

**19. Face answereth to face.** A man sees in other men a reflection of his own thoughts and feelings. The better he learns to understand his own mind and motives, the better he can understand others, even though he cannot see and know their actual thoughts (see 1 Cor. 2:11).

**20. Never satisfied.** The more a man has, the more he wants. With selfishness the ruling passion of the unregenerate man, there is no limit to the ambitions that he may form and no limit to the destruction and death that he may bring upon others in the process (see Prov. 30:15, 16; Eccl. 1:8; cf. 1 John 2:15, 16).

**21. To his praise.** See on chs. 17:3; 25:4. Praise is a good test of a man's character in two ways. A good reputation maintained over a number of years is good testimony to a man's integrity, but how a man reacts to praise is often very revealing. If he can stand the acid test of flattery without becoming vain or self-satisfied, he is made of good material.

**22. Bray.** Literally, "to pound fine." Women beating grain in a mortar with heavy pestles, exerting all the strength of their arms and backs, represents vividly that the severest punishment will never cure a fool of his folly.

**23. State of thy flocks.** Verses 23–27 are an ode in praise of pastoral and agricultural living. The "state" is literally the "face," "look," or "appearance." A parallel to the work of pastors, church elders, parents, and youth leaders is naturally observed (see 1 Peter 5:2–4).

**24. Riches.** Heb. *chosen*, which may also mean "strength." The LXX translates the first clause, "for a man has not strength and power forever." Two applications are possible: (1) Take good care of your flocks, because treasure may be lost and your farming may be your salvation. (2) Because your strength will fade one day, you will need to be prepared against old age.

**25. The hay appeareth.** Or, "the grass is laid bare," that is, the grass is cut and gathered to make way for the new grass. Fodder from the hills is cut and stored. All this is part of the necessary care if the prosperity pictured in the next two verses is to follow. The LXX renders this verse, "Take care of the herbage in the field, and thou shalt cut grass, and gather the mountain hay."

**26. Price.** The goats will produce enough profit to buy the field.

**27. For thy food.** Goats' milk was one of the common foods in Palestine. It was used fresh or curdled, sweet or sour, hot or cold. The flesh of the goats was also eaten (see Ex. 23:19; Lev. 7:23; Luke 15:29).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

4 PP 385; 5T 56

18 Ed 219

## CHAPTER 28

*General observations of impiety and religious integrity.*

**1. Bold as a lion.** The wicked man is condemned by his troubled conscience even before he

is accused by men. When death draws near, the difference between the courage of the man who seeks righteousness and the cowardice of the man who loves sin is even more apparent. While the good man has a quiet confidence in his Saviour, the wicked man often meets death either in defiant boldness or in cringing fear. When David faced what many thought was certain death (1 Sam. 17:32–34), he was bold because he believed that he was the servant of the Most High, doing His will and abiding under His protection. Compare the experience of Jonathan (1 Sam. 14:6–16).

**2. Many are the princes.** Social and moral decay frequently result in a rapid succession of rulers. When a wise man takes over, disorder in the kingdom is put down, law and order reinstated, and the settled state of the country preserved (see Eccl. 9:14, 15).

**3. A poor man.** When a poor man becomes an oppressor of the defenseless, he causes harm like the beating rain, which carries away the top soil instead of promoting germination and growth.

**4. Praise the wicked.** Only one who has himself rejected the authority of the law will take pleasure in the success of an evil man (see Rom. 1:32).

**5. Understand all things.** Those who reject the control of God's law cannot see the difference between right and wrong (Rom. 8:7), but the Lord certifies to those who submit to His guidance what course they are to pursue (Isa. 30:21; John 7:17; DA 668).

**6. Perverse in his ways.** Compare ch. 19:1.

**7. Law.** Heb. *torah*, all forms of instruction, including the law of God.

**Riotous men.** Heb. *zolelim*, “the lavish,” or “the gluttonous.” Gluttony is shameful to a man and reflects on the character of his father.

**8. Usury and unjust gain.** If a distinction more than rhetorical is intended, “usury” would refer to interest on a loan of money and “unjust gain” to increase on a loan of provisions. The money that the grasping man has accumulated by methods that God cannot approve, may, after his death, be disbursed to the poor by his heir (see Job 27:16, 17; Prov. 13:22).

**9. Hearing the law.** The fact that the one who turns from the law of God also desires to pray suggests that he is not a careless and irreligious person, but one who objects to making the divine law the guide of his life. There are many who are willing to serve God, but wish to do it in their own way. Some accept a part of the law of God as a standard of life, others claim that the law is completely done away with. Only a few take the whole of God's moral law as an authoritative expression of His will for His people (see John 14:15; 15:10; cf. Rom. 8:3, 4).

**Shall be abomination.** Sin puts a barrier between God and the sinner (Isa. 59:1, 2). Those who go contrary to their conscience and those who claim that the keeping of the so-called spirit of the law makes them superior to those who, by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, keep both the letter and the spirit of the law, do well to ponder this verse. While God passes over the lack of conformity to law in those who have had no opportunity to discover the claims of God upon them (Acts 17:30; Rom. 5:13), He cannot accept the service of those who have deliberately turned away from His law. To do so would sanction willful rebellion.

**10. Into his own pit.** The one who leads others astray is pictured as falling into his own pit together with his victims. But the righteous man rises up out of the pit and regains the right road (see ch. 24:16), pressing on under the blessing of God to the final reward. The wicked man has gained for himself by his evil deed nothing but increased guilt.

**11. Searcheth him out.** Some rich men believe that the wealth they have accumulated is in itself proof of their wisdom and cleverness; but their neglect of eternal values reveals their foolishness to the poor man who has gained understanding from God, the Source of true wisdom. The understanding poor man sees through their present prosperity to the troubles that await them



(see Ps. 73:3, 17; James 5:1–6).

**12. Great glory.** When good men prevail over evil men and give good government, there is “great glory” (see chs. 11:10; 29:2). The people know that they will be well treated if they do well, and justly punished if they do ill. Their confidence in their rulership is built up, and they rejoice in their security and are not afraid to reveal their prosperity. But they behave very differently when an evil man rules. They endeavor to conceal their wealth and avoid attracting the attention of their self-seeking governors (see ch. 28:28).

**13. Covereth his sins.** Spiritual prosperity is impossible to the man who cherishes sin. To make excuses for one’s sins is to resist the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8–11), and to run the risk of hardening the heart to such a degree that eventually there will be no further desire for righteousness or an impulse to repent.

On the other hand the acknowledgment of sinfulness is not enough. The sinner must put away his sins, and successfully resist temptation in the strength that God has promised to give (see Rom. 8:3, see 4; Phil. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 John 3:6). It is only when these conditions are met that God can be merciful. To forgive and bless the man who is clinging to sin would be to encourage him in his course, which, if pursued, would lead eventually to eternal death (Rom. 6:23; James 1:13–15). To take such a man into the eternal world would be to perpetuate the suffering, sorrow, and death that sin has caused.

**14. Feareth alway.** The man who watches himself constantly and who consistently compares his conduct with the pattern set forth in the revealed will of God, so that any deviation from rightdoing may be instantly revealed and corrected, is the happy man (see Ps. 119:11; Phil. 2:12; James 1:22–25). He is happy because he is maintaining this vigilant attitude by the strength that comes from the indwelling of Christ through the Holy Spirit (see Eph. 3:16, 17; 1 Peter 1:22, 23; 1 John 3:9; Jude 24). Because of the power of evil and the presence of Satan to deceive and to lead into sin (1 Peter 5:8; Rev. 12:12), man can fight a successful battle against sin only through the help of heavenly agencies. But when those agencies are resisted by the hardened heart, calamity is sure to come.

**15. A wicked ruler.** The utter helplessness of the common man against his powerful oppressors would lead to despair were it not for God’s promise that He will care for those who look to Him (Ps. 91:13–16).

**16. Great oppressor.** Compare Jer. 22:13–19.

**Hateth covetousness.** Covetousness is an inordinate desire for gain. Men who turn their back upon the true gain of eternal life and spend their life in seeking the temporary and trifling gains of this world reveal their lack of understanding.

**17. Flee to the pit.** In declaring that death is the punishment for murder and none should intervene to prevent the infliction of the penalty, Solomon is but echoing the words of Moses (see Gen. 9:5, 6; Ex. 21:12–14).

**18. At once.** Literally, “in one,” the meaning of which is not clear. The translation “all at once,” or “suddenly,” is improbable. The LXX renders the second clause, “but he that walks in crooked ways shall be entangled therein.”

**19. Vain persons.** Or, “vain things.” Those who seek for the vain things of life instead of working to earn a living will be certain to fall into poverty, both material and spiritual.

**20. Maketh haste.** Compare ch. 21:5.

**21. Respect of persons.** See on ch. 18:5.

**For a piece of bread.** The triviality of the considerations that will influence an unjust man to show partiality is exemplified by the figure of a piece of bread.

**22. Hath an evil eye.** The first clause may better be translated, “The man that hath an evil

eye hasteth after riches” (ch. 23:6). For the avaricious man there is no permanent gain.

**23. Afterwards.** Heb. *Ōacharay*, literally, “after me.” *ŌAcharay* is not the usual form for “afterwards,” but may be an unusual form of the adverb. Wise rebuke will bring reward to both giver and receiver even though it may hurt at the time (see Prov. 27:6; 29:5; James 5:19, 20).

**24. No transgression.** Nothing will excuse robbery. Even though the son may claim that all that his parents have will be his when they are gone, their material possessions are still not his to take without their consent. If he seizes them, he is no better than any other plunderer (see ch. 19:26). Christ spoke in condemnation of the son who refused to provide for his parents under the excuse of having deeded his property to the Temple (Matt. 15:4–6; Mark 7:9–12).

**25. A proud heart.** Literally, “one wide of soul,” that is, of desire, a grasping, avaricious man. One who is puffed up with a sense of his own importance and despises others annoys everyone he meets and causes much dissension (see chs. 15:18; 29:22). The humble, God-fearing man does his duty and trusts that God will provide for his needs. It is equally true that the covetous man arouses much enmity by his self-seeking, whereas the good man is “made fat,” that is, he prospers (see Prov. 11:25; 29:25; Hab. 2:5; James 4:1).

**26. His own heart.** That is, his own impulses and plans (see Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Prov. 14:16; 28:14).

**27. Shall not lack.** Since God regards all that is done for the poor and needy as done to Himself, wise giving to those in need will not impoverish the giver (see chs. 11:24–26; 19:17). Selfishness brings a curse by its very nature, quite apart from anything that God may do to show His displeasure (Haggai 1:9–11). Thus indirectly the neglected poor heap many a curse upon the head of the man who ignores their plight.

**28. The wicked rise.** See on v. 12. The increase of the righteous on the fall of the wicked is both in numbers and in prosperity. Under covetous rulers, good men are not likely to grow rich, and if they do, much of their increase will be taken from them.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 4 PK 660
- 9 CS 78; GC 436; PK 267; PP 584; 3T 52; 4T 535
- 13 AA 552; FE 239; GC 489; SC 42; 2T 291, 303; 5T 635
- 20 AH 391; Ed 136
- 23 2T 338
- 25 AH 179
- 26 2T 143
- 37 MH 208

## CHAPTER 29

1 *Observations of publick government, 15 and of private.* 22 *Of anger, pride, thievery, cowardice, and corruption.*

**1. He, that being often reprov'd.** Literally, “A man of reproofs.” The long-suffering of God gives sinners a probation in which to repent of their evil deeds. If they continue to harden their necks and reject the “easy” yoke of Christ (Matt. 11:30), while the mercy of God is protecting them against the consequences of their sins, their calamity and destruction will seem to come suddenly (see Prov. 6:15; 15:10; Jer. 19:15; Heb. 10:26–30).

**2. Are in authority.** Literally, “increase.” The contrast with the second clause suggests the

thought that the righteous who are increased are in authority. When good men have a chance to flourish, everyone is free and untrammelled, and even more so when the righteous are in control (see chs. 11:10; 28:12, 28).

**3. Loveth wisdom.** What father can fail to be pleased when his son shows a love for wisdom? Some might complain at overmuch learning, but wisdom has no enemies among good men. A son who turns to vice wastes all that he has. He sacrifices health and strength to late hours and riotous conduct. Wisdom and knowledge vanish under the influence of drink (see Luke 15:13).

**4. Establisheth.** Nothing breaks down security like injustice. If a man is likely to suffer innocently at the hands of his rulers, he may be tempted to decide that uprightness does not pay, and he may turn to evil ways himself. Even those who refuse to be so corrupted by the example of their governors are hindered from doing their best.

**Gifts.** Heb. *terumoth*, elsewhere referring to ritual contributions or offerings, here probably to the contributions exacted by a ruler. The phrase “he that receiveth gifts,” literally, “a man of offerings,” has been variously interpreted. It is not certain whether Solomon meant a man who gives, or a man who takes, bribes; or whether he meant a ruler who demanded sacrifices like a god.

**5. Spreadeth a net.** It is hard for men to resist flattery, especially when it comes from a neighbor who seems to have personal interest to serve by giving the praise. Even in the affairs of this life, many a man makes unwise decisions under the influence of skillful adulation (chs. 26:28; 28:23; COL 161, 162).

**6. There is a snare.** The sinner has himself put his feet into a snare, even though he may not become aware of the fact until it is too late. The righteous man sings and rejoices because God has given him wisdom and strength to resist evil and go freely on his way to the kingdom (see chs. 12:13; 18:7; 24:16). As a snare is easy to get into, but hard to get out of, so are evil habits. Without the help of God, the weak will of the sinner cannot break the strands that hold him fast. The purpose of the adversary is to hold the victim by guile, unaware of his bondage, until it is too late for him to break out and escape.

**7. Cause.** Heb. *din*, a legal term. The righteous man supports the cause of the poor man in courts of justice (see Job 29:12, 16), but the wicked man pays no attention to the rights and wrongs of the case.

**8. Bring a city into a snare.** Literally, “breathe [or blow] upon a city,” probably in the sense of inciting discontent. Though scornful men laugh at authority and right and bring about conflict, wise men do their best to allay ill feeling (see ch. 15:18).

**9. Whether he rage.** Grammatically this may refer to either the wise man or the fool, although it would be more natural for a fool to act thus in an argument. The LXX applies the anger and the laughter to the fool without ambiguity. One certain thing is that there will be no quiet while the argument between such unequal opponents goes on.

**10. The just seek his soul.** The meaning of this clause is difficult. The RV translates the sentence, but with grammatical difficulty, “And as for the upright, they [the wicked] seek his life.” Others interpret it as meaning that the upright man seeks to save the soul of the bloodthirsty man (see Ps. 142:4; however, the verb here is different). Others accept the apparent meaning of the KJV, namely, that the just seek vengeance (see Rev. 6:9–11). Still others change the word for “upright,” *yesharim*, to *resha’im*, “wicked,” so that the second clause reads, “and the wicked seek his soul.” This change makes the two clauses parallel.

**11. All his mind.** Literally, “all his spirit.” The spirit is associated with the emotions; hence,

it is probably the anger that the fool vents in the full heat of the dissension that is here referred to. The wise man waits until tempers have cooled before he quietly presents his case.

**12. Hearken to lies.** The ruler who allows himself to be deceived into favoring those who seek to please him with lies will soon have none but liars serving him.

**13. Deceitful man.** Literally, “oppressor.” The poor man and his rich oppressor associate together in many unhappy ways, but it is the Lord who gives life to both.

**14. Established.** A king who cares faithfully for the poor is doing the work of God and will be under divine protection. Such a king not only will care for the poor but will look after the rich also, so that all men will have an interest in seeing his reign and his dynasty continued.

**For ever.** Heb. *laÔad*, “continuous existence,” not necessarily without end. It frequently designates the lifetime of the individual to whom it is applied (see Ps. 9:18; 21:6; 61:8). Most of the words translated “forever” in the Bible may be safely taken as meaning “duration either long or short, the length determined by the nature of the subject to which it is applied.” If the expression is referred to the eternal God, the new earth, the unfallen angels or the redeemed, it may well mean “without end,” but the duration is limited when mortal man is described. The good king’s throne will be established until conditions change and the protection of God is forfeited.

**15. Rod and reproof.** When these two agencies are judiciously used they produce a good result. Either their neglect or overuse brings failure (see chs. 10:13; 13:24; 23:13.)

**16. Transgression.** When wicked men flourish, they naturally lower the whole moral tone of the community, but they will not continue without end. The righteous who are praying for wickedness to be restrained will see their prayers answered (Ps. 37:34; Prov. 28:28).

**17. Give thee rest.** The properly disciplined child gives his parents none of the unending anxiety that the spoiled child causes. Instead there comes a deep joy and satisfaction in seeing him make his own right choices.

**18. Vision.** Heb. *chazon*, not ordinary vision, but in every one of its 35 occurrences, prophetic vision. Except for the prophecies of chs. 30 and 31, attributed to Agur and Lemuel respectively, the present reference seems to be the only mention of prophets or prophecy in the book. Nevertheless, the whole of Solomon’s writings are a communication of wisdom and knowledge to men by God.

**Perish.** Heb. *paraÔ*, “to let go.” The first clause literally reads, “Where there is no vision the people is let loose [or lack restraint].” When a church or nation has so cut itself off from God that He cannot communicate directly with it through His own chosen messengers, then the people lack restraint.

**Law.** Law here comprehends the whole of the revealed will of God. Instead of the anarchy and misery that result when every man does that which is right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6), there are prosperity and happiness when the will of God is followed.

**19. Will not answer.** That is, he will not respond to instructions. Although the reluctant slave understands well what his master wants him to do, it will take more than words to make him do it.

**20. In his words.** Or, “in his matters.” Hasty thoughtless speech and action cause trouble for both the speaker and those around him (see Prov. 26:12; James 1:19).

**21. His servant.** Domestic slavery was different from mass slavery. Affection and trust sometimes grew up between master and servant (see Gen. 15:2; Ex. 21:5, 6), and the servant might be made an heir.

Another view of the proverb makes it a warning against favoring an unworthy servant who might

begin to poison the mind of the master against the master's own children. In the end he may gain such influence over his master that he persuades him to disinherit the children and leave the family property to the wily slave (see Prov. 17:2).

**22. Aboundeth.** The man who has lost his temper has lost control of himself. The LXX renders this verse, "A furious man stirs up strife, and a passionate man digs up sin" (see Prov. 15:18; James 1:20).

**23. Uphold the humble.** The second clause reads literally, "the humble one of spirit shall lay hold of honor." Not only does the humble man eventually gain honor, but he retains it, because the same humility characterizes him after he has been elevated as marked his conduct before (see Prov. 15:33; 16:18, 19; 25:6, 7; Dan. 2:30; Luke 14:11).

**24. Hateth.** The companion of a thief is in danger of being apprehended as an accessory in crime, and of losing his life. When solemnly adjured to reveal his guilty knowledge, further concealment makes him a perjurer (see Lev. 5:1; Judges 17:2).

**Bewrayeth.** Literally, "maketh known." The word "bewray" formerly meant "to expose," "to divulge," "to betray."

**25. Fear of man.** The person who is so afraid of men that he neglects his duty or does what he knows to be wrong, endangers his salvation. But the man who fears the Lord is "safe," literally, "set on high," and hence protected from all attacks of the enemy (see Prov. 18:10; Isa. 51:12; Matt. 10:28; Mark 8:38).

**26. From the Lord.** Rulers and magistrates do not decide man's ultimate destiny. This judgment rests with the Lord.

**27. Abomination to the just.** If this is the close of Solomon's part of the book of Proverbs, as seems evident (see chs. 30:1; 31:1), this verse makes a fitting conclusion, for it summarizes the subject matter of the book. The mutual antipathy of good and evil about which the wise man has spoken, extends to those who practice these deeds. The good man finds it impossible to remain in close, personal relationship with bad men because their aims, preoccupations, and standards are so different. Unless he lowers his own standards he cannot be comfortable in their presence. The opposite is equally true (see Isa. 53:3; John 15:19). Unless the wicked man is willing to let the good character of the righteous influence him into changing his own ways, he will be irked by association with the upright. The "hatred" which the righteous man feels should be a detestation of the wickedness of the wicked man (see Ps. 139:19–21).

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 TM 453; 4T 208

5 CS 147; 4T 567; 5T 75, 398, 478

15 4T 383; 5T 325

18 ML 163

20 Ed 236; MYP 135

23 ML 332; 3T 476

## CHAPTER 30

1 *Agur's confession of his faith.* 7 *The two points of his prayer.* 10 *The meanest are not to be wronged.* 11 *Four wicked generations.* 15 *Four things insatiable.* 17 *Parents are not to be despised.* 18 *Four things hard to be known.* 21 *Four things intolerable.* 24 *Four things exceeding wise.* 29 *Four things stately.* 32 *Wrath is to be prevented.*

**1. The words of Agur.** The interpretation of this verse has occasioned much discussion. Nowhere else in the Bible do we read of Agur or Jakeh or Ucal. The name Ithiel is found in Neh. 11:7 as belonging to a descendant of Benjamin. Some Jewish interpreters believe that “Agur” was an allegorical name for Solomon. They render the opening phrase, “The words of the gatherer the son of the Pious [or Obedient],” referring the designation “Pious” to David. The Vulgate follows a similar idea, rendering the phrase, “The words of the Collector, son of the Utterer.”

Those who do not consider Solomon the author of this section reason that it has a somewhat lower tone than the preceding portions of the book. They also point to vs. 2 and 3 as an unlikely utterance of Solomon.

One Greek version and a number of expositors find in the word for “prophecy” the designation of a place called Massa, probably the one referred to in Gen. 25:14; 1 Chron. 1:30. But even with this designation no light is thrown on the identity of Agur. The reference in 4T 455, 456 is similarly inconclusive. However, it is not necessary that we know through whom these inspired words were given.

**2. Understanding.** This statement appears to be the frank confession of a man who realizes that he has not attained to the intellectual advancement within his grasp.

**4. Who hath ascended?** Only by so doing could a man gain any considerable knowledge of the Holy One. Jesus claimed that He alone could reveal the Father, because He alone had been in heaven (John 1:18; 3:13; SC 16).

**Bound the waters.** With this verse compare Job 38 and 39.

**5. Word.** Heb. *Ōimrah*, not occurring elsewhere in Proverbs. *Ōlmrah* is found in the psalm from which the thought may have been taken (Ps. 119:140). The Lord has especially guarded His Word. To those who learn to rely upon it, the Word becomes a perfect shield and protection.

**Pure.** Literally, “refined” (see Ps. 12:6).

**6. Add thou not.** Since the Word of God is purified by divine care, we should not tamper with it. Our finite minds can never fully understand the thoughts of God (Prov. 30:3, 4; Isa. 55:7–9).

Moses gave a similar warning concerning the utterances of God (Deut. 4:2). John closed the last book of the Bible with an even more emphatic prohibition (Rev. 22:18, 19). There is no intention here to forbid the exposition of the Word of God as long as that Word is left unadulterated to act as a check upon the conclusions reached. It is the alteration or abandonment of the objective standard of truth that brings confusion and earns the reproof of God.

**7. Two things.** Verses 7–9 present two requests to God the writer desired to see fulfilled during his lifetime.

**8. Vanity.** Heb. *shawŌ*, “emptiness,” “worthlessness.”

**Poverty nor riches.** A prayer to be kept in moderate circumstances, for reasons given in v. 9.

**9. Lest I be full.** The great danger in wealth is that it tends to make a man feel independent of God’s goodness and thus to separate him from the only Source of true riches (see Job 21:13–15; Ps. 73:12). Poverty, on the other hand, tempts a man to feel that God has ceased to care for him, and may lead him to use sinful means to provide for his own needs (see Isa. 8:21). All men, rich and poor alike, must maintain the feeling of dependence upon the heavenly Father.

**10. Accuse not.** The life of a slave may be made very much worse by the secret slandering of him by a free man. Sympathy is to be shown toward those in lowly positions.

**11. A generation.** This verse begins a series of statements describing the generation then existing. The age is marked by disloyalty to parents, a sin deserving of death in Israel (Ex. 21:17;

cf. Prov. 20:20).

**12. Own eyes.** Compare Christ's indictment of the Pharisees (Matt. 23:25–28; Luke 18:9, 11).

**13. Lofty.** Compare chs. 6:17; 21:4.

**14. As swords.** The greed of this class knows no limits. These people cannot rest till the poor man is completely despoiled of his property (see Amos 8:4).

**15. Horseleach.** Heb. *Ôaluqah*. From its similarity with the Syriac, New Hebrew, and Arabic, also on the testimony of LXX, most expositors agree that *Ôaluqah* describes a large leech, common in Palestine, which has an insatiable desire for blood.

**Crying, Give.** The first clause reads literally, "the leech has two daughters, Give, Give." "Give" may be considered either the name or the cry of these daughters.

**16. It is enough.** The grave can never be so filled that there is no more room for death; the childless Israelite woman could never cease from her urgent desire to have children so that she might hold up her head among other women (see Gen. 30:1; cf. Gen. 16:4); a parched, "thirsty" soil can never get enough water to render it permanently fertile; and a fire will devour all it is given and never be satisfied.

**17. Mocketh at his father.** Long life is promised to those who honor their parents (Ex. 20:12). Violent death with no burial is here threatened for one who breaks the commandment.

**19. The way of an eagle.** The four items mentioned are examples of inscrutable things, drawn from natural history. Some have observed that the point common to each of these four diverse things is that there is nothing to mark the path that they have pursued. Allegorizations such as liken the eagle to Christ (Deut. 32:11, 12), the serpent to the devil attacking Christ the Rock (Rev. 12:9), the ship to the church pursuing its unmarked course through the sea of sinful humanity, and the maid to the Virgin Mary, do violence to sound principles of Scriptural interpretation.

**20. Done no wickedness.** The adulteress, together with all sinners who have escaped the observation of men and feel that there is no trace left of their transgressions, will find all her misdeeds laid bare in the judgment (see Matt. 12:36; 2 Cor. 5:10).

**22. A servant.** The earth trembles under such incongruities as a slave made king, without any training to fit the bondman for the post (see ch. 19:10); a fool who is wealthy and able to gratify his uncontrolled desires to indulge himself and trouble others (see ch. 29:2); an unattractive woman who lives a soured and lonely life before finally marrying and then venting her spite upon those who formerly looked down upon her; and, lastly, a servant girl who fills her mistress's shoes and is as little fitted to rule a household well as the slave to govern a kingdom.

**25. The ants.** See on ch. 6:6.

**26. Conies.** Heb. *shephannim*, probably "rock badgers." They take shelter in the rocks, and are said to appoint sentries to warn them of danger.

**27. Locusts.** These show no sign of having leaders, yet they move with the synchronism of a well-trained army.

**28. Spider.** Heb. *sšemamith*. The word occurs only here and the identification is uncertain. Probably a kind of lizard is meant. A slight change in vowel points permits the translation, "the lizard is taken with hands." This rendering makes the statement concerning the lizard parallel those concerning the other creatures. Great achievements in spite of feebleness are stressed. The lizard is so weak that it can easily be seized by the hand, yet it invades kings' palaces.

**29. Four are comely in going.** Four examples of efficient and confident movement are given.

**30. A lion.** The word here used for “lion” occurs elsewhere only in Job 4:11; Isa. 30:6.

**31. Greyhound.** Heb. *zarzir mothnayim*, literally, “one girt in the loins.” In the modern Hebrew *zarzir* represents the starling. Precisely what creature the wise man had in mind cannot be determined, since the word occurs only here. The ancient versions rendered *zarzir* “cock.”

Another conjectural definition is “horse.”

**33. Churning.** Heb. *mis\*, “squeezing,” “pressing,” “wringing.” “Butter” represents milk curds or sour milk. Angry pressure upon the nose produces blood, and pressure upon one who is angry will certainly produce strife.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

5 CG 539; Ed 244; FE 190

5, 6 COL 41; MH 429; 8T 316

25 CG 59; 4T 456

## CHAPTER 31

1 *Lemuel's lesson of chastity and temperance.* 6 *The afflicted are to be comforted and defended.*

10 *The praise and properties of a good wife.*

**1. Lemuel.** The verse reads literally, “The words of Lemuel, king, a prophecy [or, if the word is left untranslated, “of Massa”], which his mother taught him.” For “Massa” see on ch. 30:1. This chapter is closer in style and spirit to the rest of the book of Proverbs than is ch. 30, and there are those who think that Solomon wrote it. They regard Lemuel as another name for Solomon. However, this cannot be established, nor is a knowledge of the precise authorship important. The words are inspired and full of valuable counsel. The LXX has the following introduction to this new section, “My words have been spoken by God—the oracular answer of a king, whom his mother instructed.”

**2. What, my son?** The question seems to be, “What shall I tell you?” “What counsel shall I give?”

**3. That which destroyeth.** This may be understood as “them that destroy kings,” thus making the whole verse a warning against unchastity.

**4. For kings.** Indulging in intoxicating liquor can do much harm, even when imbibed by ordinary men. When rulers become subject to the slavery of alcohol, the damage done to them as individuals is greatly multiplied in the damage done to their subjects as a result of their irresponsible rule.

**5. Forget the law.** The dulling of the sensibilities and the increase in selfish desires caused by liquor make a ruler likely to ignore justice and to decide according to his own interests, thus bringing hardship upon those whom he dislikes and upon the suffering poor.

**6. Give strong drink.** Compare Prov. 20:1; 23:29–35; see on Deut. 14:26.

**Ready to perish.** Without the knowledge of narcotics possessed by medical men today, the ancients had often only various mixtures of intoxicating drinks and preparations of narcotic herbs with which to dull the pains of fatal illness. Those who were crucified in the time of Christ were offered a mixture of vinegar and gall. Our Lord refused to drink the mixture. He desired a clear mind to resist the temptation of Satan and to keep strong His faith in God (see Matt. 27:34; DA 746, 754, 755).

**8. Appointed to destruction.** Those in dire difficulty, who cannot speak for themselves in the courts, whether because of poverty or the antagonism of the rulers of the country, need the aid



of good men who can speak for them (see Job 29:12).

**9. Plead the cause.** Compare Prov. 21:13; Zech. 7:9; 8:16.

**10. A virtuous woman.** The next 22 verses are in the form of a skillful acrostic built around the Hebrew alphabet of 22 letters. Verse 10 begins with the first letter, v. 11 with the second, etc. A number of the psalms are similarly constructed (Ps. 9; 10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145).

The “virtuous woman” is literally “a woman of power.” The LXX has *gunaika andreian*, literally, “a masculine woman,” meaning that she is strong, vigorous, and possesses excellent qualities. The Hebrew words may be interpreted as meaning, “a woman of firm character.”

**12. All the days.** Sometimes a woman grows weary of welldoing. Perhaps her husband has failed to praise her good works, or has seemed to have more interest in her as a provident housekeeper than as a companion (see v. 28), and so she becomes slack and careless, or hard and overbearing.

**13. She seeketh wool.** The busy wife takes a real pleasure in her efficiency. She goes out of her way to get materials to work upon that will be of benefit to her family.

**14. Food from afar.** The same keenness to buy only the best and for the lowest price is still to be seen in womankind. It will make women walk or ride for miles to obtain some advantage over nearer markets. Also they like to bring surprise items to the table—food from afar.

**15. Yet night.** The good woman would appoint the day’s work for her servant girls at the same early hour, thus training them to be as diligent as herself.

**16. Considereth a field.** Money earned is used to make wise purchases of land, and the land is improved by clearing it and planting it with vines. Thus her original profit is put to work in order that she may earn still more profit; yet no one suffers. Her gain is not another’s loss. She is producing new wealth by her good management.

**17. Girdeth her loins.** The figure is probably that of girding up the robe to leave oneself free for active work. The woman’s vigorous health and muscular strength are increased by her constant activity.

**18. She perceiveth.** By investigation she makes sure that her activities are profitable.

**Goeth not out.** The lamp burned all night in a well-ordered Eastern home and was extinguished only in times of calamity (see Job 18:6; Prov. 13:9; Jer. 25:10).

**19. Spindle.** Heb. *kishor*. The word occurs only here and more probably applies to the distaff, to which the woman would stretch out her hands as she spun the thread from the bunch of flax or wool tied to the distaff. What she would hold is more probably the spindle, which caused the filaments to twist into a thread.

**Distaff.** Heb. *pelek*, more exactly, “the spindle.”

**20. To the poor.** The kind of efficiency here pictured sometimes results in a complete lack of sympathy for the less skillful poor; but this good woman has a thought for them (see ch. 19:17). No doubt some of her prosperity is due to her care for the poor and the consequent blessing and approval of God (see ch. 22:9).

**21. Snow.** Snow falls in small quantities at some time during most of the winters in many parts of Palestine, and warm clothes are highly desirable.

**22. Silk.** Rather, “fine white linen.”

**Purple.** Probably the highly favored garments sold by the Phoenicians.

**23. In the gates.** To be known in the gates, recognized and greeted by the elders of the city, was a desirable honor. The good repute of his wife and the wealth she helped to create would do much to elevate a man in the eyes of his fellows (see ch. 12:4).

**24. Fine linen.** Probably “linen garments,” and the “girdles,” the richly embroidered linen girdles which the rich wore in place of the commoner leather belts. By exchanging such products with the Phoenician traders, the wife could wear such luxuries as purple garments without being extravagant (see v. 22).

**25. Strength and honour.** The capable wife and mother carries herself in the conscious dignity of proved ability. She laughs at the future because she has made ample provision for it.

**26. Wisdom.** A woman who spends much time in gossip can never perform the many useful actions that fill this woman’s hours. Her kindness is evident from her voice, whose soothing tones do much to keep quiet order in her household.

**27. Bread of idleness.** Compare 2 Thess. 3:10.

**28. Call her blessed.** It is a rich reward to a mother when her children give public testimony to her loving and efficient care. Husbands can never give too much sincere praise to the one who spends her days in constant activity to make a good home.

**29. Thou excellest.** The testimony of the husband.

**30. Beauty is vain.** Charm and beauty in themselves are of little value. Some who possess loveliness of form and face prove unlovely in the stress of daily life. Beauty earns the praise of the unthinking, but the only woman of true worth is the one who fears the Lord. She alone has true beauty and charm. The fear of the Lord enters into every worthy aspect of human life and personality.

**31. Her own works.** For men who cannot read the heart, the only sure way to estimate the quality of another is to study the fruit of the life as revealed in the works. In the gates of the city, where judgments are made concerning all who live within the walls, the works of the virtuous woman speak for her and she needs no other advocate. She will enjoy forever the sweet fruits of her unselfish toil and her good example.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

4, 5 Te 53

11, 12 MH 359

13 AH 91

13–17Ed 217

19 AH 91

20 Ed 217

21 CG 420; MH 288; ML 145

26 AH 87, 345, 434; ML 114, 178; 6T 69; 7T 50; 9T 41

26, 28, 29 MH 359

27 Ed 217

28 AH 250, 534; GW 206; ML 197

30, 31 Ed 217

## ECCLESIASTES *or, The Preacher*

### INTRODUCTION

**1. Title.** The name of this book in the Hebrew is *Qoheleth*, “Preacher.” This title the speaker applies to himself in ch. 1:12. *Qoheleth* probably refers to a “convener” of a meeting, or to the